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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable LUTHER STRANGE, a Senator from the State of Alabama.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's prayer will be offered by Father Steven E. Boes, executive director of Boys Town in Boys Town, NE.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Lord God, we recognize today, on Pearl Harbor Day, the sacrifices of those young men and women who gave their lives for their country.

Lord God, in these troubled times of fires and floods and hurricanes and terror attacks and mass shootings, help us to rely on Your strength to envision and build a stronger and more secure America. Give us more visionaries like Father Edward Flanagan, who founded Boys Town on December 12, 100 years ago. Father Flanagan was an Irish immigrant who lived the American dream and taught us all that even the most troubled child could grow up to be a useful citizen if given half the chance. He saw the best in the kids whom others rejected as useless.

Help us but especially each of our Senators to see the best in those who have different political or social views so that we can, together, build an America that enables and calls forth the best in its citizens.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication

to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 7, 2017.

To the Senate:

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

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nebraska.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today to thank Father Steven Boes from Boys Town for delivering our opening prayer this morning. The work he does to help at-risk youth across America is awe-inspiring, and I am proud to say that he is a Nebraskan.

Boys Town is a special place, and it is located in the heart of our country. In the late 1910s, while ministering to the homeless of Omaha, Father Edward Joseph Flanagan became interested in young people and their struggles to grow into responsible, productive adults. He wanted to help them improve their lives, and he soon founded Boys Town on December 12, 1917, as an orphanage for boys.

A few years later, Father Flanagan purchased Overlook Farm on the outskirts of Omaha, which soon became known as the Village of Boys Town. He knew that children would thrive if given love, a home, and a purpose. His message that every child deserves a loving home and a chance to create a positive future for themselves is one that resonates across social boundaries.

Today, Boys Town is one of the largest nonprofits in the country, serving underprivileged and at-risk children. Father Boes's leadership at Boys Town is a tribute to Father Flanagan's mission to build better communities by promoting stronger families. For nearly 100 years, Boys Town has worked tirelessly to nurture troubled children and heal broken families. Every year, the organization helps more than 2 million children and families across the United States.

Boys Town also has a renowned school, which offers a year-round traditional academic curriculum that focuses on helping students, especially those who are behind in their school work. It helps children in difficult circumstances find success in the classroom, as well as get back on track toward graduation.

The school's motto echoes that of the organization as a whole: "He ain't heavy, Father, he's my brother." I believe that motto is a great explanation of why we are celebrating Boys Town's 100th anniversary next week. For a century, through terrible depressions, horrible world wars, droughts, and snowstorms, Boys Town has served as a glimmer of hope for many who are looking for help.

I don't think Father Flanagan would be surprised to learn that Boys Town has grown to include 12 regional headquarters across our great Nation or that his charity really has become a jewel of the nonprofits. His outlook created a firm foundation for helping our communities, and it is one that Father Boes continues to build on.

That deserves to be celebrated. I am happy that on July 6, 2015, the Boys Town Centennial Commemorative Coin Act was signed into law. This bill authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to mint five-dollar gold coins, one-dollar silver coins, and half-dollar coins in honor of Boys Town's 100th anniversary. Adorned with designs and sayings that capture the spirit and mission of

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



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Boys Town, these coins can act as good reminders of those who once helped us. I hope they also serve as encouragement to improve our communities and think about those who are less fortunate.

I wish Father Boes continued success going forward. We in the Senate are all rooting for him. Boys Town exemplifies the spirit of America, and it is the prize of the State of Nebraska. I am honored to be its Senator.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

THANKING THE SENATOR FROM NEBRASKA AND THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to thank our colleague from Nebraska and our guest this morning for reminding us of the wonderful story of Boys Town. We were discussing the movie from the late 1930s starring Spencer Tracy and Mickey Rooney, as well as learning what has happened to Boys Town since then.

Thank you so much, Senator FISCHER and our guest, for bringing us up to date on the latest on Boys Town.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2199

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2199) to authorize appropriations for border infrastructure construction, to provide conditional resident status to certain aliens, and to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to include grounds of inadmissibility and deportability for alien members of criminal gangs and cartels, and for other purposes.

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

NOMINATION OF JOSEPH BALASH

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in addition to our important work on tax reform and to fund the government, this week the Senate is also continuing our efforts to confirm President Trump's nominees to his administration.

Soon the Senate will consider the nomination of Joseph Balash to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management.

Through his career in both State government and as the Alaska commissioner of natural resources and his service here in the U.S. Senate, Mr. Balash has shown his talent and passion for affordable sources of energy and environmental protection.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources manages one of the largest portfolios of land, water, oil, gas, renewables, timber, and minerals in the world. Mr. Balash's leadership of the department required collaboration with many diverse stakeholders and a dedication to the protection of Alaska's natural beauty. He worked closely with the Interior Department and the commissioner, and he has the skills necessary to fulfill this leadership role at the Department.

As the Assistant Secretary, Mr. Balash will be responsible for many of the Interior Department's critical functions, including the management of all Federal lands and waters, the management of their associated resources, and the appropriate regulation of surface coal mining. I look forward to working with Mr. Balash on many of these issues, especially those important to the coal miners in my home State of Kentucky.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this nomination.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on another matter, yesterday the Senate formally voted to join our colleagues from the House to consider our tax reform bills in a conference committee. It is another important step toward delivering much needed relief to the men, women, and families we represent. Now the committee members will reconcile the differences between the bills. When they finish their work, Members of both Chambers will have the opportunity to pass this tax reform legislation and send it to President Trump.

As I have said before, tax reform represents the single most important thing we can do right now to grow the economy and boost middle-class families. It will also incentivize businesses to bring investment and jobs home and keep them here. We want a tax bill that works for hard-working American families, one that can bring opportunity, help create new jobs, and keep more money in workers' paychecks. That means a typical family of four earning a median income could see a tax cut of approximately \$2,200.

This tax reform plan is our way of helping families get ahead and plan for their future. It has taken a lot of hard work to get to this point, and I wish to thank my Senate colleagues and our friends in the House and in the Trump administration for their efforts to fundamentally rethink our Tax Code.

I look forward to the conference committee's report so we can complete our efforts and deliver relief to those who need it most.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on one final matter, the Senate must act before the end of the week to pass a clean, short-term funding bill to maintain critical operations of the Federal Government. Our colleagues in the House will send us the non-controversial provision soon, and then we will have an opportunity to consider it. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting to pass it. This short-term continuing resolution will provide us with the time we need to complete discussions on a long-term solution. It will also provide certainty to States to continue funding the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Later today, Speaker RYAN, Leader SCHUMER, Leader PELOSI, and I will meet with President Trump to continue discussing an agreement to fund the Federal Government. I look forward to working together with colleagues in a serious, bipartisan way to address a number of the priorities of our Nation in the coming weeks. I hope all Members will join me.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ISSUES BEFORE CONGRESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I first would like to talk today about year-end business.

Congressional negotiators are making good headway on a budget deal that would meet our commitments to our military and also our urgent priorities here at home. I hope this progress continues this week.

Unfortunately, the progress in Congress is in stark contrast to the rhetoric coming from the White House.

President Trump again suggested yesterday that a “shutdown could happen.” If a shutdown happens, as the President seemed to be rooting for in his tweet earlier this year, it will fall on his shoulders. His party controls the Senate, the House, and the Presidency.

Nobody here wants to see a shutdown. We Democrats are not interested in one. That is why we are working with our Republican colleagues in good faith to resolve all of the issues we have to solve before the end of the year, and it is in this spirit that Leader PELOSI and I will go to the White House this afternoon to discuss all of the issues before us.

It is no secret that one of the major sticking points—if not the major sticking point—in the negotiations is funding levels for programs that invest directly in economic growth and a social safety net for the middle class. Democrats are pushing for sorely needed funding to combat the opioid crisis, to shore up pension plans, to support veterans’ health, to relieve student loan debt, and build rural infrastructure.

Without a budget agreement that lifts spending caps on both defense and economic development in a fair and equitable manner, programs I have mentioned, and so many others—medical research comes to mind—could see their funding cut. Our veterans deserve better. People seeking recovery from opioid addiction deserve better. Hardworking pensioners deserve better. We must do both things—support the military and programs that create jobs and growth here at home—in equal measure. Both are very important.

I know there are some on the far right who say all the jobs programs and economic growth programs are unimportant, but most of us, Democrats and Republicans, believe both are important. The idea that both are important has been the basis of successful budget agreements going back several years, including the agreement we reached last April, where the military side and the domestic job, economic growth side were treated equally.

Unfortunately, it appears that the Freedom Caucus—a rather small bloc of hard-right House conservatives—is trying to derail another successful parity agreement. According to press reports, the Freedom Caucus is pushing for a very short-term extension of funding for jobs and economic development, while pushing for a long-term extension and a large increase for funding in defense. That is a ruse designed to slash funding for education, healthcare, infrastructure, and scientific research—all the things the Freedom Caucus, against the will of the overwhelming vast majority of Americans, doesn’t want the government to fund.

Make no mistake, the Freedom Caucus is gearing up to hurt the middle class on the budget, just like so many Republicans way beyond the Freedom Caucus did with their tax bill—just like on the tax bill. We Democrats are

going to defend the middle class because they need our help, too, and they have been forgotten by our Republican colleagues throughout the year, but this time, the Freedom Caucus’s actions, if they had their way, could lead to a disaster. Speaker RYAN must stand up and tell the Freedom Caucus, no, they cannot be allowed to hold hostage productive bipartisan budget negotiations with outrageous demands that hurt the middle class. If Speaker RYAN lets them have their way, it will cause a shutdown. It will be on the Freedom Caucus’ shoulders, Leader RYAN’s shoulders, and the President’s shoulders because such a bill could not pass either the House or the Senate—we are giving them fair warning right now—not right at the deadline.

DREAM ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Mr. President, let me say a word about the Dream Act. Earlier this week, my friend, the senior Senator from Illinois, came to the floor to update the Senate on the progress he is making in his negotiations with Senate Republicans on an agreement that would provide a significant investment in border security in exchange for the Dream Act.

As I have said in the past, Democrats support real border security. We will be happy to join with Republicans to pass legislation to secure our border in exchange for the Dream Act. Those talks continue to make good progress. I hope we can reach an agreement soon.

SPECIAL COUNSEL MUELLER

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, a word on the special counsel. Over the past few weeks, I have continued to hear Republican lawmakers and partisan media hosts attack the integrity of Special Counsel Mueller in a shameful display meant to undermine his investigation into the connections between the Trump campaign and Russia. Spuriously attacking Robert Mueller, one of the most respected and trusted civil servants in our country, is the surest route to losing all credibility.

I remind everyone on the right who are trying to muddy the waters on the Mueller investigation that Robert Mueller was a career prosecutor who has served both Republican and Democratic administrations in the most trusted of roles. He was appointed by President Trump’s own Deputy Attorney General. It defies credulity to lambaste him as partisan or biased. He is as straight a shooter as they come. This is bigger than one man. The attacks on Special Counsel Mueller and his investigation erode faith in the rule of law, that bedrock principle at the heart of our civic life.

If independent investigations into matters as grave as foreign interference in our elections succumb to intimidation and partisan slander, we will be no better than a third-world country. Rule of law will be gone, at

least for the President of the United States, which is something Americans have treasured for centuries. What has always defined American democracy is an unyielding faith in the rule of law—its power to check our people, as well as our Presidents. Special Counsel Mueller is the rule of law at work in our 21st century American democracy. Intentionally and spuriously impugning his integrity—not because he has done anything wrong but because they don’t like what he is doing; very partisan, very biased, very one-sided is their view—is not only inaccurate but damaging to a core ideal in our country—the independent and impartial rule of law. We must loudly reject the strident voices who engage in these attacks on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Mr. President, on the issue of taxes, with the passage of the Republican Senate bill last Friday, the Republican Party has shrugged off its history as the party of tax cuts and become the party of tax hikes on the middle class. The Republican tax bill will end up raising taxes on millions of middle-class families to pay for corporate welfare.

As our Republican colleagues march us toward an enormous corporate tax cut, we have seen numerous companies start to announce plans to buy back more of their stock—not build factories, not create jobs, but to buy back their stock, which, of course, benefits the CEOs because the stock price goes up.

T-Mobile has announced \$1.5 billion in stock buybacks; Mastercard, \$4 billion; Bank of America, \$5 billion. Just this morning, three or more companies announced hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of buybacks. These companies, I would say to President Trump and I would say to my Republican colleagues, are not announcing new investments in their workforce or wage increases, as Republicans promised they would. They are announcing stock repurchasing programs that benefit their wealthy investors.

The tax bill will also saddle the next generation of leaders with larger deficits and debts, limiting our ability to make the kinds of investments we need to be making in education, infrastructure, and scientific research—a far surer path to good-paying jobs and raising wages than giving corporate America, already flush with cash, even more stock buybacks. For the same reason, those increased deficits, Republicans are now coming back and saying that they want to slash Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, making it even harder in America to access affordable healthcare and retire with dignity.

Speaker RYAN admitted it yesterday. He said: “We’re going to have to get back next year at entitlement reform, which is how you tackle the debt and

the deficit," and he specifically mentioned Medicare. They first create the deficit by these huge tax cuts for the wealthiest corporations and individuals, and then they take it out on the middle class by saying: We have no choice but to cut Medicare. What is the matter? I hope the American people will see this. I hope some of the news channels and radio commentators will note this, since those are the people who listen to them.

By the way, that is only what we know about the bill. It was muscled through the Chamber with such reckless haste, we are finding errors and consequences every day. In yesterday's *POLITICO*, Greg Jenner, a former top tax official in Bush's Treasury Department who helped write the 1986 tax reform bill, was quoted as saying:

The more you read [of the Republican tax bill], the more you go, "Holy crap, what's this?" We will be dealing with unintended consequences for months to come because the bill is moving too fast.

That is a Republican, a former tax official from President Bush's Treasury Department.

When we were debating the Affordable Care Act—a process that took over a year—the esteemed majority leader admonished: We need to slow down and get this right.

The tax bill, by comparison, spent hardly 2 weeks in the House and 3 weeks in the Senate, and it is a lot worse for the average middle-class person. I would say the same thing to the majority leader that he said to us: Slow down and get this right. There is no need to rush this hastily considered, highly complex, hugely consequential tax bill before some artificial deadline.

We have a responsibility to get this right for the American people, particularly the American middle class. I still believe the way to do it is through an open, transparent, and bipartisan debate.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, on December 10 of this week, we will celebrate International Human Rights Day. It is the 69th anniversary of the United Nations' adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It provided inalienable rights for everyone in this world to be entitled to basic human rights, regardless of their religion, regardless of their race, their color, their gender, their language, their politics, their national origin, their property, wealth, birth, whatever. You are entitled to basic human rights.

The declaration further goes on to say that the ignoring and contempt of human rights have been among the principal causes of the suffering of humanity. That clearly has been the case throughout the history of the world

and is still relevant today—very relevant today.

The interesting thing about the universal declaration is that it acknowledges that we all have responsibilities. This is not just a country responsibility; we, as citizens of the world, have an obligation to challenge when human rights are violated anywhere in the world. That is our responsibility. It is interesting that one of the responsibilities I have as the ranking Senate Democrat on the Helsinki Commission, which is the organization that monitors our participants and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe—that declaration, the Helsinki accords, which was entered into in 1975, was an acknowledgement of basic human rights; it is a responsibility of all the participating countries to adhere to basic human rights. The Helsinki accords also make it very clear that any member country of the OSCE has the right to challenge what is happening in any other country. We have a responsibility as global citizens to speak out when basic human rights are being violated.

I also point out that this is one of the basic tenets of America's strength. One value embodied in our Constitution, embodied in our history, is a respect for human rights, and it makes America the unique Nation it is. Yes, we are looked upon as a global power because of our military and economy, but I must tell you, the real trademark of America, the real value we give to the international debate is the fact that we bring a commitment to basic human rights and values as part of our DNA. That has been very much demonstrated in so many ways.

I am proud of many of our accomplishments on behalf of international human rights. America's leadership on trafficking in persons—there have been Democrats and Republicans who have taken the lead on this to make it clear that we will not tolerate modern-day slavery. We took the lead on that; Congress took the lead on that. We passed the "Trafficking in Persons Report." We now monitor activities in every country in the world, including the United States, in order to protect against modern-day slavery.

I am proud of the passage of, first, the Magnitsky statute, which dealt with Russia, and now the global Magnitsky statute, which says: If a country does not hold accountable their gross violators of human rights, we will not give them access to our banking system or the ability to visit our country. When we passed that law, other countries followed suit. Europe has enacted the Magnitsky statute, Canada has enacted it, and individual countries have enacted it. We show leadership, and the world follows. We have effective tools to say that we will stand up and live up to our commitments to enforce human rights.

What we often do is put a spotlight on those human rights defenders who are being persecuted around the world.

By putting a spotlight on it, we give them hope. That is what we did in regard to the human rights defenders in China, human rights defenders in so many places around the world.

Quite frankly, one of the principal functions of our missions in countries around the world is to be there to speak out for basic human rights, to speak out in support of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I am proud of our Foreign Service officers who carry that mission every day in every country around the world.

When potential nominees for Ambassadors come before our committee, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, we question them as to their commitment to support American values on human rights and what they will do in the country they will be representing America in order to advance those causes. This is part of our responsibility based upon the United Nations declaration, but it is also part of what we need to do in order for us to stay safe.

We know there is a direct correlation between a country's respect for human rights and the amount of conflict, the amount of violence, the amount of insurgency that takes place within that country. Violent extremists will have a place to breathe if a country doesn't respect the human rights of its citizens. It is in our national security interests, in addition to doing what is right as a nation and as a global citizen.

We have challenges today. We have autocratic leaders around the world who are violating every day the human rights of their citizens. We need to help lead the international community. We see attacks on journalism and the rights of free press, where it is, in many places in the world, not safe to comment freely about what is happening in a country.

The LGBT community has been under constant attack in many parts of the world, and we need to defend their rights. Human rights defenders are being imprisoned in so many countries around the world. We need to stand up for their rights. Yes, in trafficking in persons, Senator CORKER and I recently put a spotlight on what is happening in Libya, where they actually have slave auctions that are taking place, where people are being sold. We can't be silent about those types of activities or, in our own hemisphere, about what is happening in Venezuela, where there is a government that is denying its own people the right of access to international humanitarian aid. People are dying in hospitals because they can't get medical supplies. We need to speak out about that.

Many of us have come to the floor to talk about the challenges we have as global citizens on the number of refugees, the displaced persons we have. We have numbers now that we haven't seen since the end of World War II of people who do not have a home, who are refugees. We need to do something

about that. The most recent mass number left Burma because of the persecution of the Rohingya Muslims, and they are now in Bangladesh in horrible conditions. We all have a responsibility to respond. There are a number of refugees from Syria—huge numbers—and it requires U.S. leadership.

This has been a bipartisan commitment in the Senate and a bipartisan commitment in the Congress, but I must tell you that I am disappointed by President Trump's failure to lead on this issue. He recently visited Asia. What an opportunity that would have been to have brought up the human rights struggles, whether they are in North Korea, which is the worst country in the world on human rights, or China, which has significant challenges, particularly with respect to its religious minorities, but also as to the right of its people to have economic freedom. There are major problems in China and problems in the Philippines with its President and what he does in regard to extrajudicial killings. The President hardly mentioned human rights at all during his trip to East Asia.

He embraces leaders like Mr. Putin of Russia, who is a gross violator of the rights of his own people, and President Duterte of the Philippines, whom I already mentioned. President Trump embraces those types of leaders. We should be pointing out that Mr. Putin should be held accountable for his violations of human rights, and President Duterte should be held accountable for the extrajudicial killings that take place under his watch. The United States should be in the lead in bringing these issues to the public's attention.

Then there is the President's immigration policies. We have always been the leader in the world's effort to welcome those who have been persecuted in other countries. We talk about our historical commitment of welcoming the huddled masses who are yearning to breathe free. That is America. Now we are closing our borders to refugees—to those who are being persecuted? We say to the countries in the Middle East: Open up your borders to the refugees from Syria or open up your borders to the refugees from that region. Yet, in the United States, we cannot handle a few numbers?

We need to have much stronger and enlightened policies as we are now talking about people who have been long-term Americans. They only know America as their home. We are now telling the Dreamers or those under temporary protected status, because they have fled the gang violence in El Salvador or Honduras: You are no longer welcome in the only country you know, America. President Trump needs to lead on this issue because it is our global responsibility, and it is in the interest of our country.

Yes, Human Rights Day is coming up this week. Let's rededicate ourselves to fight on behalf of human rights globally. That is our responsibility. It is who we are as a nation, and it is who we are as global citizens.

I urge my colleagues to remember the words of John F. Kennedy when he said that, here on Earth, God's work must be our own. That is true. Let us carry on the work of respecting the human rights of all people in the world.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. STRANGE. Mr. President, I rise today to address my colleagues for the last time. After nearly a year in this Chamber, I am both its newest Member and the next to depart. As such, I have both the optimism of a young student and the battle scars of a man in the arena. Today I would like to offer my colleagues some observations from the perspective of my unique circumstances.

My fellow Senators and I come from different places. We were raised differently, and we have lived differently. In coming to serve in the world's greatest deliberative body, we have carried and tested different notions of America.

There is, however, one reality that transcends our individual experiences. In this Chamber, we are each humbled by history. The Senate has been a forum for some of the great debates of our Republic. It has shaped—and has been shaped by—citizen legislators from every State in the Union. We are awed by the strength of an institution that has weathered great challenges and the wisdom of those who first envisioned it.

As I rise today in that spirit, I would like to shed some light on a page of Senate history that bears great significance in our current political climate. As we know, across the aisle behind us is a space known as the Marble Room. In a building that is home to so many breathtaking historic sites, this alcove has a singular beauty and a story worth telling.

As part of the 1850s expansion of the Senate's Chambers, the Marble Room began as a public gathering place and has been frequented over the decades by politicians and protesters alike. When the Union Army camped on the grounds of the Capitol, soldiers even used its fireplaces for cooking.

For over 60 years, the Marble Room was steeped in the life of the American citizen. It hosted meetings with advocates, constituents, and the free press. It became a very tangible example of our Nation's experiment in representative government. In March of 1921, it took on a new, equally important purpose. The space was reserved by the Rules Committee as an escape for Senators from the crowded halls of the Capitol and the windowless, smoke-filled rooms where they often had to

gather off the floor. It became the place where Senators of all stripes would come to catch their breath and take their armor off. Some would nap, some would eat lunch, some would read the newspapers, and all would end up forming bonds that rose above politics.

Today the Marble Room is almost always empty. This emptiness symbolizes something that worries me about today's politics. It is likely both a symptom and a cause of the partisan gridlock that often dominates this Chamber.

But the story of that room—the interplay between citizens and institution, between pragmatism and principle—is the story of the Senate and in some ways the story of republican government in America.

What was once an incubator for collegiality and bipartisanship has become a glaring reminder of the divisions that we have allowed to distract us from the business of the American people. We each remain humbled by the history of the Marble Room. We stand in awe of the traditions of this hallowed body, but too often we fail to let this history be our guide through today's political challenges.

My time in the Senate has reinforced for me what it means to balance principle and pragmatism and to serve the people of my State honorably, and it has taught me how to navigate the turbulent waters of Washington. I imagine that our predecessors who spent time together in the Marble Room wrestled with similar questions.

After all, the issues we face today are not all that different. This body has been strained before—it has bent but has not broken. Finding lasting solutions to our Nation's problems does not require reinventing the wheel. Our forefathers have done it before, and they have done it right across the hall.

I spent my early years growing up in Sylacauga, AL—familiar to my friend the senior Senator—about 40 miles outside of Birmingham. My first hometown is known as the Marble City for the swath of high-quality stone it sits upon, 32 miles long and as much as 600 feet deep.

Sylacauga marble is recognized for its pure white color and its fine texture. Here in the Nation's Capital, we are surrounded by it. It is set into the ceiling of the Lincoln Memorial and the halls of the Supreme Court, and it was used by renowned sculptor Gutzon Borglum to create the bust of Abraham Lincoln that is on display in the crypt downstairs.

Sylacauga marble is used in places infused with tradition and deep history. It is used to enshrine important landmarks. It ensures that memories of the past will stand the test of time to inform the decisions of the future.

In a small house in the Marble City, I was raised by a family that instilled in me a deep and abiding reverence for

history and tradition. My father was a Navy veteran and my only uncle, a West Point graduate killed in service to our country in World War II, was, ironically, born on the Fourth of July.

As you can imagine, I didn't need to observe parades, flags, and fireworks to understand the sacrifice people have made to preserve our freedom. I just had to look in my mother's eyes on her only brother's birthday to remember that sacrifice. Forged in service and sacrifice, my family understood the blessing of living in America and the price of passing its freedoms on to the next generation.

Thanks to this generation before me, the "greatest generation," I grew up strong in Alabama. At a young age, I was introduced to the Boy Scouts of America, as many of my colleagues were. From volunteer troop leaders to the older scouts I looked up to, the Boy Scouts created an environment of selfless service. As a scout, I learned to appreciate the institutions of American society and my role as a citizen. By the age of 13, I was an Eagle Scout traveling to Washington, DC, on a school trip to see this great experiment in representative government up close. As I tell every young person who comes to see me, that made an enduring difference in my life.

I often wonder, if we all approached our duties here with the wide-eyed wonder of a young student on a field trip, whether we couldn't accomplish a little more in Congress.

Of course, the strength of this body and the remarkable foresight of our Founding Fathers run deeper than an elementary school civics class or a trip to Washington. For me, the next pivotal moment came as an undergraduate student at Tulane University in the spring and summer of 1973.

I know many of my colleagues will not be surprised to know that I played basketball in college, and there is a reason why. I am the tallest Senator in history, as I have come to understand it. In between practice and part-time jobs, I did find time to watch the newly formed Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities begin its investigation of the Watergate scandal.

In that moment, our Nation stepped into uncharted territory. The strength of our Constitution was tested like never before. Would the pursuit of justice overcome politics? Would the institution of the Presidency be forever changed? What are the responsibilities of citizens in the Republic when the Republic's institutions are tested?

It was during that spring semester of 1973 that I began to understand the tremendous power of the rule of law. It is guarded by representatives who swear to protect, preserve, and defend the Constitution of the United States.

When my basketball playing years ran out, it was this realization that led me to go to law school. My new game would be learning the ins and outs of this system that ensured the rights our

Founders envisioned. My new team would be my fellow classmates and students who would go on to practice law and serve our Nation at all levels of government.

As so many of our colleagues know, the path from practicing law to writing it is well traveled. I was fortunate to travel it with the help of some of Alabama's finest public servants. As a young attorney, I first met one of them for breakfast in the cafeteria at the Department of Justice. In those days, you could go to the Department of Justice without having to show an ID, and I quickly discovered, after I had gotten my breakfast, that I had forgotten my wallet. So Jeff Sessions had to pay for my meal. He has continued to pay it forward to this day, as a dear friend and mentor, and, of course, he is now the Attorney General of the United States of America.

Jeff Sessions is a gracious statesman and a man of principle, and it is not farfetched, in my opinion, to say that some of his temperament rubbed off on him from our State's senior Senator and my dear friend, Senator RICHARD SHELBY. I so appreciate his presence here in the Chamber today.

Over 30 years ago, I was introduced to then-Congressman SHELBY by my friend, former Secretary of the Senate Joe Stewart, a person who revered this institution. As a young lawyer, I learned from a man fast becoming a legendary legislator. He would become one of my most treasured friends, sharing many days hunting together in the fields of Alabama and elsewhere and many more stories shared here in the halls of the Capitol.

Together, Jeff Sessions and RICHARD SHELBY represent the finest Alabama has to offer to our Nation. Following in their footsteps here in the Senate is an honor I will forever treasure.

The example of these men inspired me to get involved in public service. As the attorney general of Alabama, Jeff Sessions set an example. As the most influential, revered Senator in our State's history, RICHARD SHELBY has guided the way, each with an unparalleled reverence for the rule of law.

I spoke earlier about the balance of pragmatism and principle. In doing so, I had my friends in mind. When I was elected attorney general for the State of Alabama in 2010, I drew heavily on their examples of principled conservative leadership.

In this body we are too often convinced that standing for deeply held principles is incompatible with pragmatism. In the 6 years I have served as attorney general, I learned that this could not be further from the truth.

Serving my State in that capacity required balance above all else, as the Presiding Officer, having been an attorney general himself, would understand. I had an obligation to the people of Alabama who elected me to fight for the conservative victories they were counting on, but I also had a solemn duty to rise above politics and follow the law and truth wherever it led.

Make no mistake, during my two terms as attorney general, I took every opportunity to defend the Constitution and the people of Alabama against Federal Government overreach—in other words, defending the rule of law, the oath that we take.

Together with other State attorneys general, I worked to protect farmers and ranchers from an EPA rule that would turn puddles in their fields into federally regulated ecosystems. We stood up against threats to religious liberty and the Second Amendment, and we took the fight over illegal executive amnesty all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. On these and many other issues, we stood for the rule of law, and we won.

I don't have to prove my commitment to conservative principles. At the same time, I have a record of upholding the rule of law even when my own party goes astray. I have the scars to show for it, believe me. Over my 6 years in the State capitol of Montgomery, I assembled a nationally renowned team of prosecutors behind a common goal: to root out public corruption.

This pursuit led to the convictions of several corrupt public officials in the State of Alabama, including a county sheriff complicit in human trafficking—the first successful prosecution of its kind in decades.

My team took on Alabama's Republican speaker of the house for ethics violations, leading to his removal from office and a prison sentence. As you might imagine, we didn't make any friends in the political establishment by doing so, but we shored up public trust in our representative government.

For their commitment to fighting public corruption, my team has been recognized by the National Association of Attorneys General as a gold standard. I personally had the opportunity to address my former colleagues from both sides of the aisle who are focusing on the same goal in their States. More than any fleeting partisan achievement, it is work like this of which I am the most proud.

When faced with crises, we rose to a calling higher than politics. After the tragic Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010 decimated communities and ecosystems along the gulf coast, I was appointed by the court as coordinating counsel for the Gulf Coast States in that historic litigation. Our team, working together with others, won the trial and negotiated a multibillion-dollar settlement for our State and other coastal States.

Our work on that spill case built consensus, and it found common ground. It brought together the interests of fiscal conservatives and environmental advocates, and we delivered results because it was the right thing to do. While the victims of the Alaska oil spill, which the Presiding Officer is well familiar with, had to wait many years for a resolution, we were able to deliver justice

and set a gold standard for responding quickly and effectively to the needs of our coastal communities.

After all, the institutions our Founders laid out in the Constitution are only as strong as the people's belief in their strength. When America no longer trusts that its representatives are remaining true to their oaths, the entire system loses its value.

As the most recent Senator to take that oath, I remember the feeling of the Bible under my left hand. I remember reflecting on a verse it contains that has brought me peace in times of challenge. Proverbs 19:21, which I keep by my bedside, says: "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."

I remember raising my right hand here in the well, where so many others have gone before—many of whom likely found it difficult to discern exactly what the Lord's purpose was in that moment. Each of them came to this body in the face of significant national challenges. Some faced violent conflict, others an economic crisis. Our forebears would not be surprised by the issues before this body today, but I do believe they would be surprised and discouraged by the emptiness of the Marble Room.

Mr. President, the policy challenges we face are not new ones. This body debates a budget resolution every single year. Many years, it also faces questions of war and conflict overseas. And at least once a decade, it seems, we face some tectonic shift of the economy.

As a lifelong student of history, I am reassured by stories of the grave crises that have been addressed on this very floor. In this Chamber, the post-Civil War Senate ensured that the Nation stayed the course of healing and reunification. In this very Chamber, the Senate put politics aside to defeat the rise of fascism in Europe and guided the creation of a new 20th-century world order. On this floor, long-overdue support for civil rights was won, vote by vote.

This civil rights struggle is held vividly in the memory of my home State. In the early 1960s, my elementary school in Birmingham, AL, was segregated. By 1971, I was taking the court with three young Black men—my teammates, my classmates, and my friends—to play for the State basketball championship.

As our Nation evolves, the traditions and history of the Senate demand that this institution meet each new challenge, armed with the will of the American people.

And as I watched with the rest of the country, it was on this floor that the Senate restored faith in our institutions by delivering justice after Watergate. It was a real pleasure for me as a lawyer later in life to get to meet Fred Thompson, who served in this great body and was the counsel for the minority on the Watergate Committee, to see the example he set as a Senator and to call him a friend.

The idea that the chaos and upheaval we see today are unique falls flat in the face of this monumental history. Pundits and politicians alike are too quick and easy to talk in superlatives, but chaos and change are nothing new to this country. The Senate was designed to endure, and rooms of marble are built to last.

Studying that Senate history puts the issues of today in perspective for us, but it also sheds light on the true challenge of our generation—a newer, more serious threat to the future of this institution and its traditions.

You see, the Senate was designed to accommodate conflict and profound disagreement. It was not, however, designed to tolerate the entrenched factionalism that dominates today's proceedings. It was not designed for the people's representatives to hunker down in private rooms, emerging only long enough to come to the Chamber and cast votes.

There are 100 seats in this Chamber. Each one was contested and hard-earned, but they are rarely all occupied. The less time we spend in the same room, the easier it becomes to view our colleagues on the other side of the aisle as obstacles instead of opportunities.

What do I mean by opportunities? Mr. President, I believe our generation of leaders will be judged by history on whether we strove to heal the divisions of this body and our Nation. In pursuit of that goal, every Member of this body has an opportunity to grow in understanding.

Yet it seems to me that "compromise" has become a dirty word in American politics, and that is a serious threat to our hopes of advancing meaningful policy, in my view.

It seems that reasonable Americans understand what we are called to do better than we do. I see the chairman of the Agriculture Committee here, who is a dear friend and maybe can put this better than I can. As he knows, a wise farmer in Alabama once told me: When my wife sends me to the store to buy a dozen eggs and there are only half a dozen left, I come home with a half-dozen.

I believe we have the power to bring home half a dozen here in the Senate and maybe even bring home a dozen for the American people. We have the power to be a profound force for good.

After all, compromise was baked into the Founders' design of this institution. At the heart of our system of checks and balances is an understanding that no one branch and certainly no one partisan faction will get all it wants, all the time.

From the very beginning, compromise allowed our Nation to embrace both the republicanism of Thomas Jefferson and the federalism of Alexander Hamilton. The very structure of this body is the result of the Connecticut Compromise of 1787, which accommodated proponents of both equal and proportional representation.

The authors of this very pragmatic solution, Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth, are depicted on the wall right outside the Senate Chamber, not far from the Marble Room, where their example of finding common ground would be practiced for decades to come.

Mr. President, in the shadow of these founding debates, political voices today are arguing louder and louder about smaller and smaller things. It is easy for those outside this Chamber to insist that they know what should be done, and as long as we remain so deeply divided, those outside voices will always win.

When I leave the Senate, I hope to have lived up to the words of a different voice, familiar to those of us in the Chamber. On April 23, 1910, in a time of great change in this country, as the United States was coming to define a new world order, President Teddy Roosevelt delivered a now famous passage that bears repeating:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasm, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

Here today, our Nation faces challenges like it did during Watergate 43 years ago and like it did in the time of Roosevelt 107 years ago. When we have each left this great body, I know we would like to be remembered as men and women in the arena—as people who spent themselves in worthy causes.

I am convinced the worthiest cause we can join today is a return to the collegiality, the pragmatism, and, yes, dare I say, the compromise of the Marble Room.

So, Mr. President, as I leave the Senate, I am indebted to so many—to those who have helped me become the man I am today, to the colleagues who have welcomed me as a partner in the people's business and who are so kind to take time to be here today in the Chamber, and to the great State of Alabama, which I have had the immense honor to serve.

I thank God every day for the blessing of my wife, Melissa, and my children and grandchildren who are here with us today. Greeting every day assured by their love and support has made my work here and throughout my life possible.

I thank my staff in Alabama and here in Washington, many of whom are here joining us, who have risen to the task of serving our great State through troubling times. Their tireless dedication reminds me there is a very bright future ahead for my State and for this institution.

I thank the staff of the Senate serving here on the floor and in the cloak-rooms, the U.S. Capitol Police, and all of those who preserve, protect, and defend this hallowed institution.

I thank each of my colleagues for the privilege of joining them in service. The friends and working partners I have found here in the Senate give me great hope that, in the right hands, this experiment in representative government will long endure.

I thank the men of principle who have served Alabama with honor for years before me. I especially thank my friend RICHARD SHELBY for his friendship and his guidance during my time here in the Senate.

Finally, I thank the people of my State. Alabama is a beautiful place with millions of hard-working, good people who call it home. As I look back on my career, I am most proud of the last 7 years I have spent working on their behalf, both in Montgomery and here in Washington.

Mr. President, in preparing my remarks today, I spent a lot of time in the Marble Room. I reflected on the stone that built it and the bedrock of my hometown. I thought about the lawmakers who frequented it years ago. I thought about the challenges they faced, their own principled stands and pragmatic negotiations. Most importantly, I thought about the common ground they found there.

Off the record and away from the cameras, this space represents an opportunity to once again find balance. Balance between principle and pragmatism in the Senate would reflect the very spirit of America, which is defined by balance.

The zeal for adventure that won the West and put human footsteps on the face of the Moon is balanced by a reverence for tradition and our founding principles—individual liberty, the rule of law, and the pursuit of happiness. The entrepreneurial drive that built great cities and today drives innovators to ask “what’s next?” is balanced by a solemn remembrance of the struggle and sacrifice that have paved the way.

The Senate is a sacred place that was designed to embrace the spirit of America. To lose the art of balance and compromise in this body is to lose something essentially American. If we cannot find shared cause, shared purpose, in the quiet corners of the space across the hall, then we may never find it here on the floor of the Senate, where the critics are so quick to point out how the doers of deeds could have done them better.

As I prepare to leave this esteemed body, I urge my colleagues, who will face many more challenges ahead, to take these words to heart. For the sake of our Nation, I urge them to return to the Marble Room.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

TRIBUTES TO LUTHER STRANGE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on behalf of all of our colleagues, I want to thank the junior Senator from Alabama for an extraordinary farewell. Due to the unusual circumstances of his arrival, his service here regrettably is limited to roughly a year, but I know all of our colleagues share the view that the Senator from Alabama has made an extraordinary difference for Alabama and for the Nation during his time here. I know I also express the views of all of our colleagues that we will miss him greatly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise as a Member of this great body to say thank you to our good friend from Alabama for serving. It is such a shame that we have so many good people in this body and some really great people in this body who are here for such a short period of time, and to have a person like Senator STRANGE come before us and be part and try to make a difference.

I truly enjoyed his speech based on bipartisanship, which is what we are all here for, and seeing how we have digressed to the point where there is very little bipartisanship that goes on and then knowing that we can make that change and make a difference.

I want to thank the Senator. It has always been a joy to be around him. He has such a way and such a demeanor about him—his congeniality, his camaraderie and wanting to make this place work the way it is supposed to work and the way they have told us it did work.

With that I would say, Senator, I am grateful I got to know you. I am grateful that you have passed through these doors for all of us to call you our friend. I am sad that you are not staying.

I know there are bigger things in store for you. I know your life is going to be blessed, and with that, you blessed us by being part of us for a period of time.

Thank you, Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I have had the unique privilege of knowing Senator STRANGE in that I have the privilege of being the chairman of the all-powerful—sometimes-powerful—Senate Agriculture Committee.

I hope every Senator will read your comments, sir. I think, perhaps, every Senator in their heart wishes, as you do, that we could get along better. For better or for worse, I think we represent the Balkanization in this country, but we come here with the hope that, yes, through compromise, and, yes, that in working together, we can represent our people in a much better fashion. Your remarks, I think, really hit the nail on the head in terms of what we should be doing.

We do that on the Agriculture Committee. When Luther first came to the

Senate and asked to be on the Agriculture Committee, I knew right then he was a special person and would be a special Senator. A lot of people get sentenced to the Agriculture Committee. It is a pleasant sentence, really, when you do that work. I have been privileged to be the chairman in the House and in the Senate for quite a few years. We will not get into that.

The Senator asked to be on the Agriculture Committee, and so, when we try to put together a farm bill, it is our responsibility—both the distinguished Ranking Member STABENOW and myself—to travel to various States. We have sat on the wagon with the farmer, the rancher, the grower, and said: What do you think? We listen to the farmer first, knowing that if you are fair to the farmer—they are the backbone of the Nation and underappreciated in our society today.

So I have been going to Kansas, Michigan, and Montana, and I said: I haven’t been down South, I am going to Alabama. I am going to go down there with our newest Member who wants to be on the Agriculture Committee and has already demonstrated his affection, not only for the committee but his commitment to represent farmers and growers and ranchers in Alabama. So we planned an event. We were going to listen to every commodity group, every farm organization, and any farmer who wanted to come in and talk to the chairman and the new member of the Agriculture Committee.

This was a special day for me and, as sometimes happens, planes don’t fly. Planes fly to Atlanta, but they don’t fly from there, which was the case when we were going down the night before, before we had this opportunity to visit with a lot of folks in Alabama. If you try to find a rental car that time of night, it is difficult. So we finally found a rental car after the third or fourth rental car opportunity, and then we drove to Montgomery.

Now, if you drive from Atlanta to Montgomery—people don’t usually recommend doing that, but I will tell you, from about 1:30 in the morning to about 4 a.m., it is an easy drive. Then you get to Montgomery, and you get to that square they have there in Montgomery where they have a statue of Hank Williams. So the first person to welcome me in Montgomery, AL, was Hank Williams. Of course, being a country and western aficionado—or at least fan—I thought that was very special. So we went down and saw Hank. I saluted him.

Then we went off to the hotel. Of course, the hotel had given up our hotel reservations. So that posed a little bit of a problem. They finally made some accommodations for me, at least, but it didn’t have a bed. It was an office room. Then I finally figured out it was a wall bed, and I pulled the wall bed down, but there were no sheets and pillows. I just sort of slept in my wardrobe, so to speak. Then I said: I can’t sleep. It was getting to be 5:30, 6:30

a.m., and we were starting off about 7 in the morning.

I came down the elevator, and as happened, the elevator door opened up. Across from me was Luther. He said: How did you sleep, Mr. Chairman? I said: As well as could be expected. Finally, I told him what happened.

After all of that, I had probably one of the best days in my service in the Senate, visiting a State I had not visited before. I talked to every commodity group, every farm organization representative. We went out to many different farms. I learned firsthand that a big export factor to China is peanuts. If we are going to be making friends with China—or at least getting to a situation where we have a better relationship with any country—as you know, agriculture can be a tool for peace. It is a stabilizing factor. It becomes a national security situation. We talked about this at length.

I must say I was very impressed with the folks I met there and the respect they had for you, Luther, for wanting to be on the Ag Committee, obviously, and for your record as attorney general and your public service. To a person, they were committed to you and thanking you for your service on the Agriculture Committee.

So wherever you go, whatever you do, I know you are an Aggie. I know you will continue to fight for your farmers, and, as you know, we are going through a pretty rough patch.

Personally, I want to thank you for your friendship, and, personally, I want to thank you for the message you gave to all Senators here, which I think should be mandatory in our quest to see if we can't achieve a better situation in working together to find solutions. The Senator from West Virginia and I feel the same way, and I know whatever you are going to do, you will do so with dignity and with respect and with strong leadership.

Thank you, my friend.

Mr. STRANGE. Thank you.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to bid farewell and to express my gratitude to Senator LUTHER STRANGE as he leaves the U.S. Senate. During his too-brief tenure here, he established an admirable reputation for hard work, dedication to his State of Alabama and our Nation, and a commitment to principles.

Senator STRANGE was appointed to the Senate last February to fill the vacancy created when Senator Jeff Sessions became Attorney General of the United States. From the start, it was clear that Senator STRANGE's pride in his home State was matched only by his humility at being selected to represent the State he loves.

Building on the reputation he earned as attorney general for Alabama, Senator STRANGE established himself here as a determined advocate for the rule of law and defender of our Constitution. From preserving the Senate traditions that foster full and open debate to supporting our veterans and

strengthening our national security and our economy, Senator STRANGE has worked on a number of important initiatives.

Senator STRANGE has met the obligations of his office with energy and dedication, and it has been an honor to serve with him in the U.S. Senate. I wish him and Melissa all the best in the years to come and look forward to many more contributions and accomplishments from this distinguished American.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I just want to say on the record how much I have enjoyed serving with the Senator from Alabama. He has meant a great deal to this institution, to this body during his short time here, and it is sad to see him go.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session, as under the previous order.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Joseph Balash, of Alaska, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 1 hour of debate equally divided in the usual form.

If no one yields time, the time will be charged equally.

The Senator from Minnesota.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, a couple of months ago, I felt we had entered an important moment in the history of this country. We were finally beginning to listen to women about the ways in which men's actions affect them. The moment was long overdue. I was excited for that conversation and hopeful it would result in real change that made life better for women all across the country and in every part of our society.

Then the conversation turned to me. Over the last few weeks, a number of women have come forward to talk about how they felt my actions had affected them. I was shocked. I was upset, but in responding to their

claims, I also wanted to be respectful of that broader conversation because all women deserve to be heard and their experiences taken seriously. I think that was the right thing to do. I also think it gave some people the false impression that I was admitting to doing things that, in fact, I haven't done. Some of the allegations against me are simply not true, others I remember very differently.

I said at the outset, the Ethics Committee was the right venue for these allegations to be heard and investigated and evaluated on their merits; that I was prepared to cooperate fully and that I was confident in the outcome.

An important part of the conversation we have been having the last few months has been about how men abuse their power and privilege to hurt women. I am proud that during my time in the Senate, I have used my power to be a champion of women and that I have earned the reputation as someone who respects the women I work alongside every day. I know there has been a very different picture of me painted over the last few weeks, but I know who I really am.

Serving in the U.S. Senate has been the great honor of my life. I know in my heart that nothing I have done as a Senator—nothing—has brought dishonor on this institution, and I am confident the Ethics Committee would agree.

Nevertheless, today I am announcing that in the coming weeks, I will be resigning as a Member of the U.S. Senate. I, of all people, am aware that there is some irony in the fact that I am leaving, while a man who has bragged on tape about his history of sexual assault sits in the Oval Office, and a man who has repeatedly preyed on young girls campaigns for the Senate with the full support of his party, but this decision is not about me; it is about the people of Minnesota. It has become clear that I can't both pursue the Ethics Committee process and, at the same time, remain an effective Senator for them.

Let me be clear. I may be resigning my seat, but I am not giving up my voice. I will continue to stand up for the things I believe in as a citizen and as an activist, but Minnesotans deserve a Senator who can focus with all her energy on addressing the challenges they face every day.

There is a big part of me that will always regret having to walk away from this job with so much work left to be done, but I have faith the work will continue because I have faith in the people who have helped me do it.

I have faith in the dedicated, funny, selfless, brilliant young men and women on my staff. They have so much more to contribute to our country, and I hope that as disappointed as they may feel today, everyone who has worked for me knows how much I admire and respect them.

I have faith in my colleagues, especially my senior Senator, AMY KLOBUCHAR. I would not have been able to

do this job without her guidance and wisdom. I have faith—or at least hope—that Members of the Senate will find the political courage necessary to keep asking the tough questions, hold this administration accountable, and stand up for the truth.

I have faith in the activists who organized to help me win my first campaign and who have kept on organizing to help fight for the people who needed us—kids facing bullying, seniors worried about the price of prescription drugs, Native Americans who have been overlooked for far too long, working people who have been taking it on the chin for a generation, everyone in the middle class, and everyone aspiring to join it.

I have faith in the proud legacy of progressive advocacy that I have had the privilege to be a part of. I think I probably repeated these words 10,000 times over the years, Paul Wellstone's famous quote: "The future belongs to those who are passionate and work hard." It is still true. It will always be true.

Most of all, I have faith in Minnesota. A big part of this job is going around the State and listening to what people need from Washington, but more often than not, when I am home, I am blown away by how much Minnesota has to offer the entire country and the entire world. The people I have had the honor of representing are brilliant and creative and hard-working. Whoever holds this seat next will inherit the challenge I have enjoyed for the last 8½ years, being as good as the people you serve.

This has been a tough few weeks for me, but I am a very, very lucky man. I have a beautiful, healthy family whom I love and who loves me very much. I am going to be just fine.

I would just like to end with one last thing. I did not grow up wanting to be a politician. I came to this relatively late in life. I had to learn a lot on the fly. It wasn't easy, and it wasn't always fun. I am not just talking about today. This is a hard thing to do with your life. There are a lot of long hours and late nights and hard lessons, and there is no guarantee that all your work and sacrifice will ever pay off. I won my first election by 312 votes. It could have easily gone the other way. Even when you win, progress is far from inevitable. Paul Wellstone spent his whole life working for mental health parity, and it didn't pass until 6 years after Paul died.

This year, a lot of people who didn't grow up imagining they would ever get involved in politics have done just that. They have gone to their first protest march or made their first call to a Member of Congress or maybe even taken the leap and put their names on a ballot for the first time.

It can be such a rush, to look around at a room full of people ready to fight alongside you, to feel that energy, to imagine that better things are possible. But you, too, will experience setbacks

and defeats and disappointments. There will be days when you will wonder whether it is worth it.

What I want you to know is that even today, even on the worst day of my political life, I feel like it has all been worth it. "Politics," Paul Wellstone told us, "is about the improvement of people's lives." I know that the work I have been able to do has improved people's lives. I would do it all over again in a heartbeat.

For a decade now, every time I would get tired, discouraged, or frustrated, I would think about the people I was doing this for, and it would get me back up on my feet. I know the same will be true for everyone who decides to pursue a politics that is about improving people's lives, and I hope you know that I will be fighting alongside you every step of the way.

With that, I yield the floor.
The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from Alaska.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following the disposition of the Balash nomination, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Executive Calendar No. 167, as under the previous order.

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

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, today I am gratified to be finally debating and voting on the nomination of Joe Balash to be the U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Lands and Minerals.

I have been coming to the floor, as have a lot of my colleagues, making the case about how it has taken too long to get good people into the Federal Government. I am sure I will have to give that speech maybe a few more times—I hope not—to finally get people who want to serve, who have been nominated by the President, to be confirmed by the Senate, to move them. It doesn't help the American people that we just delay well-qualified Americans who want to serve their country just for the sake of delay. It is happening, but I am not going to focus on that today.

I actually want to thank the Democratic Whip, Senator DURBIN, who was actually very helpful in trying to move this nomination, which has been stalled on the Senate floor for many weeks now. Joe Balash was nominated by the President in July. I appreciate the cooperative spirit from my colleague from Illinois, and I thank him again for that.

This is a very important position in the U.S. Government. The Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management entails supervision and overseeing the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. It is very important for the entire country. It is particularly important for my State, the great

State of Alaska, and for so many others where Federal lands make up an enormous part of the State.

Yesterday, my colleague and friend, Senator LEE from Utah, talked to a number of us about how much Federal lands constitute different States in terms of the overall percentage. A lot of Americans don't know this. Usually, if you live on the east coast, you don't have Federal land as a big part of your State, but in Alaska, it is 61 percent; Idaho, 61 percent; Utah, 63 percent; Nevada, almost 80 percent. These positions in the Department of the Interior are enormously important.

This is a very important job, and I am glad to see we are finally getting to vote on it because it is important to help manage resources that we have in abundance but also protect the environment. We all love our environment. Alaska has the most pristine, beautiful environment in the world, and we know how to protect it. We also have enormous opportunities for jobs in energy on public land. What is in all the Federal statutes that Joe is going to be in charge of implementing is that you can do both. You can do both. You can protect the environment of this great Nation, and you can also utilize these incredible resources that we have on public lands. In essence, that is what his job is going to be all about.

I encourage my colleagues to look at Joe Balash's confirmation hearing and his background because he is probably one of the most qualified people to hold this job in the entire country—in the entire country. Joe Balash comes from a long, distinguished career of public service in Alaska. He was the commissioner of natural resources in Alaska, and he was the deputy commissioner of natural resources in Alaska, which manages one of the largest portfolios of land, water, minerals, oil, gas, and timber of anyplace in the world—not just in the country, in the world. Very few countries have more resources than we do in Alaska, and for years, Joe Balash was in charge of managing those. That makes him super well qualified for this job.

As DNR commissioner, he oversaw 100 million acres of uplands, State land in Alaska—this is obviously bigger than most States in America; 40 to 60 million acres of submerged lands and tidelands; and resources that included managing over half a million barrels of oil production a day. Joe oversaw a workforce of over 1,100 people as the commissioner of natural resources and a budget of \$170 million a year.

Joe understands how to build consensus, how to navigate State and Federal lands issues and interests, and, importantly, how to work to responsibly develop our resources and grow our economy, while always understanding that our lands sustain us and that stringent environmental safeguards are absolutely necessary for all Americans.

Let me say one other thing about Joe Balash. You can look at the bio, you can look at the experience, but you

also need to know the man. When I was the commissioner of the department of natural resources, Joe Balash worked for me as my deputy, and for the past almost 3 years, he has worked as my chief of staff here in the Senate.

Perhaps more than any other issue—experience, a super hard worker—he is a man of integrity, a man of character, and a man who cares deeply about his country and wants the best for Americans and for Alaskans.

I can't think of anyone more qualified—experience, character, integrity, knows the issues, cares about the environment—so I am strongly encouraging my colleagues to vote for Joe. He was voted out of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee in September with the support of every Senator in that committee, with the exception of one. When the committee looked at his experience and background and they heard about his integrity and character, there was enormous bipartisan support for Joe. I am hoping we will see that here in a few minutes when we come to vote.

I understand that one of my colleagues, unfortunately, is going to come down to the floor soon and encourage a vote against Joe. I am still not sure why. Maybe it is something related to a recusal issue between State and Federal lands in Alaska. I will be interested to hear what the recusal issue is.

Most recusal issues, by the way, as we look at confirmations in the Senate, relate to people who have interests in the private sector, and perhaps those private sector interests impact policy decisions. But when you have someone who has worked on lands issues in a State, the idea of being recused because you have expertise in policy from your State job when you go into a Federal job, to me, seems, well, outrageous. We will see what that argument is.

I do know that Joe Balash will follow the rules and regulations as they relate to ethics and conflicts in a steadfast way because I know who he is. So I again encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this extremely well-qualified nominee who has the character, knowledge, expertise, and experience for a very important job for the country and someone who is going to do a great job for Secretary Zinke and President Trump.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, the Department of the Interior is the steward and guardian of our public lands—our national parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas. As the Supreme Court said more than a century ago, it is the Secretary of the Interior's responsibility to see that none of the public domain is given away to anyone who is not entitled to it.

As the steward and guardian of the public lands, the Secretary must represent the government and the people

of the Nation as a whole, not the special interests or even the interests of a single State. But the Secretary does not do his job alone; he has delegated his authority and responsibility for land and minerals management to the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management. The Assistant Secretary exercises the Secretary's direction and supervision over the Bureau of Land Management. The Assistant Secretary needs to be someone who can discharge this important duty fairly and impartially. Equally important, though, he must be seen by the American people as someone capable of being a good steward of their public lands and not as someone who comes to the job with a predisposition to dispose of their public lands to special interests.

An impartial and unbiased decision-maker is a core element of the due process. The principle that no one can be the judge in his own case has been a hallmark of Anglo-American law for over 400 years. I believe confirming Mr. Balash to be Assistant Secretary of Land and Minerals Management would be contrary to this principle.

In 2014, Alaska's Department of Natural Resources filed a claim for 20,000 acres of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with the Bureau of Land Management. Alaska's Department of Natural Resources sought to remove the long-recognized boundary of the Refuge. It asked the Bureau of Land Management to convey the 20,000 acres of Refuge land that would then be outside the Refuge's boundary to the State of Alaska so that those lands could then be leased for oil and gas development.

Mr. Balash was the head of Alaska's Department of Natural Resources at the time it made its claim to the Bureau of Land Management. The Bureau of Land Management properly rejected Alaska's claim. Alaska appealed the Bureau's decision to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, where the appeal is now pending. If the Senate confirms Mr. Balash to be the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management, he will be overseeing the Bureau of Land Management. He will exercise the Secretary's direction and supervision over the Bureau of Land Management. He will be in a position of reversing the Bureau of Land Management's decision which originally denied Alaska's claim.

Moreover, Secretary Zinke has the authority to take jurisdiction of the case away from the Board of Land Appeals and to delegate that authority to decide the case to Mr. Balash. Mr. Balash may become the Interior Department's judge in the case that he initiated as Alaska's commissioner of natural resources.

That is my main concern. I asked Mr. Balash his plans to recuse himself from participating in the Department's consideration of Alaska's claim. I believe Mr. Balash thinks that he will comply with whatever the department's ethics office says the rules are—which is basi-

cally a 1-year recusal from being involved in that situation. That said, Mr. Balash, even under these current rules, could be in the position of being the final arbiter on a case he previously brought on expanding Alaska's claim to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. He alone could make the decision. He alone could reverse the decision on the State of Alaska's claim to the Bureau of Land Management—a claim that was turned down. He could reverse that. For that reason, I am not supporting Mr. Balash's nomination to this position today.

There are so many things that we have right now that are an unrelenting assault on our public lands and our environment by this administration, and there are many on the other side of the aisle who are supporting that. We have seen an unprecedented use of the extraordinary procedures of the Congressional Review Act to nullify carefully crafted rules to protect the public lands and environment. We have seen the Secretary of the Interior unlawfully postpone implementation of other lawful rules. We have witnessed and seen legislation on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge run through here without the proper processes and procedures. We saw the majority use the extraordinary procedure of budget reconciliation not to balance the budget, as it was intended, but to circumvent regular order. Only this week, we witnessed President Trump launch an unprecedented and unlawful assault on our national monuments. Mr. Balash, I fear, will become maybe an unwilling but nonetheless a participant in these assaults on our public lands. That is why I cannot at this point give my support to this nomination.

I know my colleague from Alaska has worked with him. I respect his opinion on this position. I hope he will respect mine. I do not think that at this point in time, without a better recusal, I can support Mr. Balash's nomination.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, President Trump has nominated Joseph Balash to be Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals at the Department of the Interior. In that role, Balash will oversee the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, and head "Interior's management of all federal lands and waters, and their associated mineral and non-mineral resources, as well as the appropriate regulation of surface coal mining."

Balash has worked for years in Alaska politics, including as the former commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

In 2013, as the acting commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Joe Balash advocated for exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Balash petitioned the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service “to reconsider its decision to bar [Alaska] from conducting seismic studies in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.”

Also, Balash has stated that he supports the Trump administration re-writing the 5-year plan for the offshore oil and gas leasing plan, which could likely lead to new areas being opened up to offshore drilling.

I am a strong supporter of protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and oppose opening up new areas of the Atlantic to offshore drilling. For these reasons, I oppose his nomination for Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals at the Department of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I am here with my colleague from the State of Alaska, Senator SULLIVAN. We have heard his comments, his very strong support of the nomination of Joe Balash to be the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management. As he has indicated, he speaks as one who has great insight and knowledge, having worked with Mr. Balash for a period of years.

As we think about those who are willing to step up and serve in this new administration, I think it is particularly telling that when we have personal knowledge, when we have had these relationships, when we know intimately of a person's work ethic, of their dedication to issues and their willingness to serve, we pay particular attention to that.

I, too, stand in strong support of Joe Balash for this position, and I thank the Secretary of the Interior for placing his trust, placing his confidence in Mr. Balash to serve on his team at the Department of the Interior.

We have an individual who knows intimately the subject area to which he has been appointed. Joe is from a community by the name of North Pole. We are all thinking about the North Pole as we get closer to Christmas. I suggest that just being from Alaska is enough to convince me that he is qualified for this position, but, honestly, the breadth and depth of his experiences and his commitment, his care, his passion, his dedication to serving not only the people but the lands that we hold so dear is a great tribute to Joe Balash.

I have known and worked closely with him for years now, from the time that he was at the department of natural resources with then-Commissioner Sullivan to the time that he served as the chief of staff for Senator SULLIVAN. Both of those jobs have allowed Mr. Balash to demonstrate time and again his competence, his expertise on a wide range of issues, particularly the stewardship of our public lands.

We had an opportunity while in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to listen to a little bit of his background, his upbringing, and how he became so personally involved and intertwined with our public lands.

Then, if you think about the role he played when he was at the State as commissioner of natural resources, he had direct responsibility, management, and protection of 101 million acres of the State of Alaska. This is larger than the entire State of California—101 million acres. He also had control of a State park system containing 3.3 million acres of land, more than twice the size of Delaware. He is used to dealing with large areas of land and the complicated and complex issues that are associated with them. He genuinely understands how we can develop our natural resources while protecting the environment and sustaining the health of wildlife and ecosystems.

He is able to balance, he is able to understand people, and he is able, as he has demonstrated as a manager, to manage land—managing energy, minerals, timber, water, and renewable energies in a State as diverse as Alaska.

In our State—I am sure that Senator SULLIVAN has noted this—we have a constitutional mandate. It is written into our State's constitution that we manage lands for the maximum benefit of our people. That means working with folks from all different sorts of backgrounds; you don't get to pick and choose. We all have our opinions and many competing points of view. Joe was able to do that and do that well.

It is not easy to navigate, but I think Joe Balash has proven time and again that he is capable and is willing to work with everyone. Whether they are hunters, whether they are Tribes, whether they are in the environmental community, the conservation community, his ability to work with folks from all sides has been proven. Now he is ready to take this next step—to take it up a notch to the broader Federal level. I believe that he will make an exemplary Assistant Secretary, not just for those of us from Alaska but for our entire country.

He will oversee the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. He will, largely, be the Department's point person for the management of our Nation's working lands, those lands that are not reserved for conservation purposes. It will be his responsibility to strengthen our energy and our mineral security for generations to come.

There is no doubt in my mind that he is the right person to take this on. I mentioned he is from North Pole. He was a two-time State wrestling champion. That takes a little bit of discipline. I think he will be well suited and will be an able partner with Secretary Zinke but, really, an advocate for the American people.

He has proven that he has the work ethic to produce the value that Americans need and deserve from their public lands. I know that his management of the Department's assets—whether it is promoting responsible energy develop-

ment or ensuring access to Federal lands for sportsmen's activities—will be carried out with a dedication to transparency, to accountability, and to results.

On the sportsmen's side, I do understand he is an accomplished buck hunter, and we recognize him for that.

Mr. Balash was considered by those of us—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for 2 more minutes.

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. Balash was considered by those of us on the Energy Committee at a hearing in early September. He was reported out 2 weeks later with strong bipartisan support. He has done everything that Members on both sides of the aisle have asked him to do. He has waited patiently over the course of nearly 3 months, as we seek to confirm him.

It was just mentioned by the ranking member that she has concerns about his ability and the recusal process. It was made very clear in committee with questions to Mr. Balash, as well as the follow-on with questions for the record, about some of the issues that Senator CANTWELL has raised. I think it is important to note that Mr. Balash pledged very clearly to consult with and follow the counsel of the agency's ethics office. He did that in committee, in a statement. He provided the same response in his QFRs. He said: I will consult with the Department's designated agency ethics official regarding this matter and fully comply with the ethics rules of the agency.

These are issues that have been asked, and they have been answered, certainly to the satisfaction of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and to this chairman, and to those who reported favorably on him from the committee. We are at the point where the Senate has now asked to confirm Mr. Balash. I wish it had come a little bit earlier, but we are where we are.

Again, I thank the Secretary for nominating Joe Balash for this very, very important and key role at the Department of the Interior. I thank Joe for being willing to continue his service to our Nation. I join Senator SULLIVAN, and a lot of Alaskans, in being tremendously proud of him. I urge all Members to support Mr. Balash's nomination to be our next Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management.

I yield back all debate time and ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

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

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 61, nays 38, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 310 Ex.]

YEAS—61

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

NAYS—38

Baldwin	Harris	Peters
Bennet	Hassan	Reed
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Sanders
Booker	Hirono	Schumer
Brown	Kaine	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cardin	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Markey	Udall
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wyden
Gillibrand	Nelson	

NOT VOTING—1

Franken

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Susan Parker Bodine, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise today to speak about the confirmation of Susan Bodine to lead the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance.

For those who may not know, that is a big job. This is an incredibly important job. The EPA's enforcement office protects the health of our citizens and our environment by ensuring that everyone is playing by the same rules. When bad actors don't follow the rules that we have put in place to maintain

a clean and healthy environment for all Americans, it is EPA's enforcement office that holds them accountable.

In the past, the actions taken by this office at EPA have led to reductions in toxic air pollution, as well as to the cleanup of contaminated lands and waterways across our country. In fact, last year alone, EPA's enforcement work required companies to invest some \$13.7 billion in similar cleanup efforts.

From the time that she was nominated, Susan Bodine's resume suggests, not just to me but to almost all of us, that she can play a very constructive role if she were confirmed to serve as head of EPA's enforcement office. Ms. Bodine has served as a staff member in both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate for over a decade. She also spent time working in the administration of George W. Bush. Given that breadth of experience, I believe she has a good understanding of the relationship that should exist between the separate but equal branches of our government and the critical role that EPA's enforcement office plays.

When she was nominated for this position, Ms. Bodine was kind enough to come to my office and spend a considerable amount of time with me and with my staff to discuss the job and her qualifications, which I appreciated very much. She spoke of the work she had done for Senators INHOFE and BARRASSO, both of whom have taken seriously their oversight roles on the EPW Committee.

From the day Ms. Bodine and my staff and I met in my office, I have made explicitly clear to Ms. Bodine that while I think she is well qualified for this job, I also take seriously the oversight role that we play on the Environment and Public Works Committee.

From the day of that meeting with Ms. Bodine until now, my request has been consistent, yet fairly simple: The EPA should provide complete, adequate, and timely responses to the committee that oversees the work of that Agency. Absent a serious commitment to do so, I have consistently said that I would be unable to support moving forward almost any EPA nominees.

I have also said from the very beginning that I do not make such statements lightly or with any sense of joy, but I believe firmly that this body and its Members have a constitutional duty to perform rigorous oversight and that we must protect that responsibility regardless of which party happens to be in power. Over 200 days is far too long to wait for responses to serious inquiries, such as those about the toxic pesticides that this EPA has deemed safe after the previous administration proposed banning them. I know that no matter who is in charge, we can do better than that.

As my Democratic colleagues and I know all too well, we are not the majority party. We don't control the Senate or its activities or who is confirmed

here or who is debated on the floor. For instance, despite my many objections and those of my colleagues, Bill Wehrum was confirmed to head up the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation. So my repeated requests have just been that—an ask with the hope that all of us, as Members of this body, could agree that certain responsibilities are more important than political wins. Some of my Republican colleagues have supported me in this, and I am grateful for that support.

As of late, I see that EPA is making a good-faith effort to begin to respond to our requests—requests of the minority within the Environment and Public Works Committee. I am now satisfied with many of these responses—not all but many of these responses—that they have sent so far, and I am pleased that we are seeing some real progress. I am hopeful—and I think I speak for the Democratic Members of the Environment and Public Works Committee and the Democratic Members of the Senate—that this progress will continue.

I have been privileged to serve in this body for some 17 years now. I think my colleagues know me fairly well, and I think they know that I try to be fair. I have voted for President Trump's nominees and for the nominees of past Republican Presidents. I do not have and have never had an interest in delay for the sake of delay. In fact, I said just last week that if a subset of the letters that were due back from EPA were completed in short order and were truly responsive, we could make progress in nominations. The Agency has done its part, and now we are here today with Ms. Bodine set to be confirmed by this body—not next week, not next month, today. I hope that this is the beginning of a new chapter and that EPA's responses to our oversight requests will be more timely going forward.

Having said that, my sincere congratulations to Susan Bodine and her family, as well as thanks to her family for sharing with us a good woman. I look forward to continuing working with her in her new role. I think I speak again for my colleagues—Democratic and Republican—on the committee and in the Senate. We look forward to continuing to work with her in this new role she will play, if she is confirmed here in a few seconds. We want to make sure that in that role, she will ensure that EPA's enforcement office remains an indispensable and credible cop on the beat.

With that, Mr. President, I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I yield back our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

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

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.

The Senator from Kansas.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORAN). The Senator from Nebraska.

NOMINATION OF STEVE GRASZ

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, today the Judiciary Committee had the opportunity to advance the nomination of Steve Grasz, one of the foremost appellate attorneys in the State of Nebraska, and I would like to make one brief comment about that.

The Judiciary Committee has now heard and soon the full Senate will be hearing about the impeccable credentials of Mr. Grasz. Steve has served with distinction as Nebraska's chief deputy attorney general for nearly a dozen years. During that time, he defended our State's laws with integrity, humility, and decency. Whether he was litigating before the Eighth Circuit, before the Nebraska Supreme Court, or before the U.S. Supreme Court, Steve's character and professionalism earned the respect of Republicans and Democrats alike.

Members of the committee became familiar with Steve and in particular his recommendation from President Obama's U.S. attorney for Nebraska, Deborah Gilg. She wrote to the committee: "Steve has always enjoyed a reputation for honesty, impeccable integrity, and dedication to the rule of law." She continued by noting that Steve "possesses an even temperament well-suited for the bench and always acts with respect to all that interact with him."

Steve has earned the support of Republicans and Democrats back in Nebraska, and I hope that when his nomination comes to the floor of the Senate, we will take to heart all of the support he has across the political spectrum and from well-respected lawyers across our State.

Thank you for the time, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

DACA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, across the country, families are deco-

rating their Christmas trees. They are singing along to holiday playlists. They are searching for that perfect gift for the ones they love. They are making travel plans to see their families. The holidays are a time for joy and togetherness, a time for faith and family, a time for gratitude and hope.

The holidays are not a time for fear. Yet, without action, Congress may leave hundreds of thousands of families across America in fear this holiday season. I am referring, of course, to the 800,000 Dreamers across America whose lives have been thrown into jeopardy by the administration's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, or DACA.

DACA is a program that made it possible for 800,000 undocumented youth across this country—including 22,000 in my home State of New Jersey—to come out of the shadows, to step into the light, and to follow their dreams without fear of deportation.

It has been months since this administration decided to end DACA. Despite what some of my Republican colleagues say, the consequences of this cruel and reckless decision are not some distant threat; more than 11,000 Dreamers have already lost their DACA protections and work permits. So to anyone who thinks we have until March of next year to take action, you are surely mistaken. For these young people who grew up in the United States, who know no other home or country, who today live in fear of deportation, the crisis is here, and the crisis is now.

Ending DACA has created a national emergency that is playing out in our communities each and every day. Tens of thousands of DACA recipients are likely to lose their status on or before March 5. So what exactly are we waiting for, and why wait at all?

There is no legitimate reason for the President to have ended DACA—a crisis that was avoidable. Now it is here, and it is our job to fix it. President Trump essentially told Congress: The ball is in your court. Well, today I want to know from my colleagues: When are we going to take our shot? If we have the votes—and I believe we have the votes—isn't it time that we held a vote?

We know there is overwhelming support from the American people, Republicans and Democrats alike, for America's Dreamers. It is not fake news. Poll after poll, from Quinnipiac, to the Washington Post, to even FOX News, shows that the American people want a solution, and we know there is solid support for the Dream Act here in the Senate.

I have seen my colleagues share the photos of the Dreamers they meet. They post the stories about these brave, young people fighting to stay in the country they know and love. But they deserve more than an Instagram post or a friendly tweet; they deserve action. Every day that goes by, more and more Dreamers find themselves in

danger of being sent back to countries they simply don't know or even remember.

Let's take a moment to remember exactly whose lives we are talking about when we talk about Dreamers. In my mind, we are talking about the "motherhood and apple pie" of the immigrant community and the question of immigration. We are talking about young people brought here as children through no choice of their own. Every child who is a Dreamer is someone who knows only the United States of America as their country. The only flag they pledge allegiance to is the flag of the United States of America. The only national anthem they know is the "Star-Spangled Banner." These children grew up in America and are American in every sense of the word except on paper.

Dreamers are studying in our colleges, playing on our sports teams, serving in uniform in our military, risking their lives on behalf of what they consider to be their country, growing our economy, obeying our laws, and most of all, loving our country, too, because it is their country as well. They aren't undocumented aliens; they are Americans who happen to be undocumented. And that includes 22,000 Dreamers in my home State of New Jersey, promising students like Sara Mora, whom you see pictured here on the floor.

Sara grew up in Hillside, NJ. Her parents brought her to this country from Costa Rica at the age of 3. She was 3 years old. As Sara recently wrote in the Star Ledger, "New Jersey has been my home for as long as I can remember." Today, she is a hard-working college student, thanks to DACA. That is how she was able to get a work permit, find a job, and work her way through Union County College. Sara was preparing her applications to transfer to Seton Hall University and earn her 4-year degree when the Trump administration announced the end of DACA. Now, Sara says, her future is one "big question mark. Without DACA, I'll go back to zero—no driver's license, no job, no possibility of paying for my education. I'll have to wake up fearing deportation every day."

When will we accept some responsibility and recognize that it is our inaction here in the Senate that contributes to Sara's fear every day?

Take Adriana Gonzalez of Toms River, NJ. As the Asbury Park Press recently wrote, Adriana is "a flute player, a student ambassador, a girl who would play soccer with special needs children." Like most Dreamers, Adriana isn't known by her peers as an undocumented immigrant; she is known as a smart young woman with a bright future and something to contribute to her community.

How about Reiniero Amaya of Elizabeth, NJ. He is studying civil engineering at Fairleigh Dickinson University. I can't think of anything more backward than deporting a hard-working

student who dreams of becoming a civil engineer. We need civil engineers. We give people from different parts of the world permits to come to the United States to do these engineering jobs that we don't have enough domestic people to do. Here is a young man who grew up in America, who is American in every respect, and who is, in essence, pursuing a career path that would inure to the national economic interest. His story is just one more reminder that our country can't afford to lose America's Dreamers. They have so much to offer to our communities and our economy.

In fact, ending DACA is projected to cost New Jersey's economy over \$1.5 billion annually and reduce the overall economy of the United States by \$460 billion over the next decade.

DACA gave Dreamers like Reiniero the freedom to pursue his dreams. But it also gave him a sense of security. He recently wrote this on northjersey.com:

The day I received my work permit and my Social Security card was the day I finally felt proud of who I am. I felt recognized. I felt safe.

That sense of belonging, of acceptance, and of safety was ripped away by the President's decision to end DACA. So long as Congress fails to act, we are complicit in prolonging the very real fear that 800,000 Dreamers feel today—the fear that the knock on the door is not your family or neighbor but an immigration agent ready to whisk you away from your family; the fear that we see when these young people who believed in our government came forth, went through a criminal background check, gave all their information, and gave information on their family, all under the guise that they thought it was going to be confidential. Now all of that is at risk.

The willingness of DACA recipients to share their stories speaks volumes about their integrity, their courage, and the trust they put in us as elected officials. I am reminded of Psalm 56:3: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in You."

Well, Dreamers like Sara, Adriana, and Reiniero put their trust in the United States of America when they applied for DACA. They came out of the shadows. They registered with the Department of Homeland Security. They passed criminal background checks. They handed over personal details about themselves and their families to authorities they had been forced to hide for their entire lives.

DACA recipients went through all of this to get a 2-year renewable work permit and the promise of protection from deportation. That is the limited bargain they made, and the administration has eviscerated that limited promise and struck fear in the hearts of all of these families.

So I ask my colleagues—Democrats and Republicans—was their faith, their trust, their belief in the U.S. Government's word a monumental mistake?

Were they wrong to believe that we could put partisan politics aside and come together and do the right thing in this case? Will the Senate go home for the holidays without lifting a finger to make sure these promising young students feel safe in their homes, in their schools, in their communities?

They have become an integral part of our American family, and many are starting families of their own. In fact, 25 percent of DACA recipients have U.S.-born children. Do we really want these young mothers and fathers to be torn from their children and sent back to the country that they never called home? Do we not have an obligation to protect American children from the trauma of losing a parent? Do we not have a moral responsibility to keep families together? Isn't that one of the basic concepts that we have?

Will we sit idly by with the implementation of the administration's policy, which says: Whether you are selling drugs in your streets—which I am all for deporting—or earning A's in our classrooms or serving in our military, everyone is fair game for deportation. No one is safe, not even children who know no other home. That is a wrong policy. That is not law and order. That is fear and chaos.

So where is our compassion and our sense of urgency? How many more Dreamers have to lose their DACA status before we stand up and do what is right? The time for temporary fixes is over. The time for empty gestures is over. The time for heartfelt words is over.

It is time for us to stand up for these young people, and it is time for us to act. It is time for us—Democrats and Republicans—to use whatever legislative vehicle is necessary to pass the Dream Act. Whether it is a continuing resolution or a straight vote here on the floor, it is time for us to get this done.

Let's put an end to the fear and uncertainty hanging over so many families this holiday season. Let's summon our collective compassion. Let's pass the Dream Act. Let's do it now. Let Congress not go home for the holidays unless we have a solution to this question. For me, it is a moral imperative that these young people, who know no other country but the United States and who are Americans in every other sense of the word, not have to live this holiday season in the fear that a knock on the door is from someone other than a family member or their neighbor.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONFIRMATION OF SUSAN BODINE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Environmental Protection Agency needs strong and experienced leadership. That is why I come to the floor today to speak in support of President Trump's nomination of Susan Parker Bodine to serve as the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance at the EPA.

Her expertise and her experience make her an exceptional pick to lead this important office at the Agency. She has extensive environmental policy knowledge from years working as a private attorney, a staffer on Capitol Hill, and in leadership at the EPA.

From 2006 to 2009, during the Bush administration, she served as the Assistant Administrator for the EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response. She also served as the staff director of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment.

Most recently, Susan served as my chief counsel at the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. That is why I know Susan is committed to finding commonsense ways to protect America's land, air, and water.

In this new role, she will work to help communities and small businesses comply with the law, while holding polluters accountable. Democrats and Republicans, alike, agree that she is the right person for the job.

Mathy Stanislaus, a former Obama EPA Assistant Administrator, said: "Ms. Bodine understands both the internal side of the agency and the proper balance of enforcement" and is a "standup person."

Ben Grumbles, a former George W. Bush Assistant Administrator and currently Maryland's secretary of the environment, said: "She's tough and fair and committed to public service."

Susan is an excellent pick to lead the EPA's Office of Enforcement. Taking on the critical task of enforcing our Nation's environmental laws is a big job. I can think of no better candidate for this job than Susan Bodine.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX REFORM BILL

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about my support for the Senate tax reform bill and to encourage Congress to help American families.

Our economy and our workforce have changed over the last few decades, and our Tax Code must catch up. If we want to build a better future for our children, we must tackle problems for families juggling responsibilities between their homes and their workplaces.

We have a chance to make history. The Senate-passed bill included my Strong Families Act, which would be the first nationwide paid family leave policy passed by this body. This proposal has the potential to make life easier for working families across our country by providing a tax credit as large as 25 percent for employers who offer up to 12 weeks of paid family leave. Employees would be able to take this time without needing to choose between potentially falling behind on their bills or spending time caring for their loved ones. Caring for families today does not just mean taking care of children. My proposal helps to ease burdens on family caregivers taking care of aging parents as well.

The Senate Special Committee on Aging recently released a report focused on America's aging workforce and the opportunities and challenges associated with it. One of its findings is that a growing group of aging workers are also caregivers. In fact, one out of every four employees over the age of 50 serves as a family caregiver.

Some employers are implementing strategies to support them, but I believe that this credit will go a long way in encouraging additional employers to take proactive steps to help these workers. This proposal also gives businesses the flexibility to set up these plans in ways that make sense for their companies and does so without mandates that some simply cannot afford.

I also want to take this opportunity to briefly address some of the criticisms of my proposal. It has been said that a provision in this bill was designed to punish States and localities that have laws mandating paid leave already in place. If employers in States and localities that already require some paid leave go beyond what is mandated at the local level, they will be able to take advantage of this credit.

We designed this credit to be targeted toward lower and middle-income workers who do not currently have access to paid family leave. We want to expand that access.

Moreover, I was happy to see an addition that was included in the Senate tax bill regarding State and local taxes. Most Nebraskans will tell you that our property taxes are too high. I agree. I supported the proposal to allow for a State and local property tax deduction of up to \$10,000 on Federal taxes.

As this bill moves toward a conference committee, I urge our conferees to keep this proposal and my Strong Families Act in the final bill. These provisions would help our families and they would help America's middle class.

Thank you.

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. LANKFORD. 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. LANKFORD. Mr. President, we are in the middle of a very protracted conversation about tax reform. This conversation started in January. I have heard people say that it has been rushed through at the end. We started in January, and we are starting month 12 of this process: hearings in the House; hearings in the Senate; different drafts coming out, shot down, starting over again, and coming back and forth. Now we are starting our 12th month of going through this process.

As we get close to the end, I want to outline a few things we are actually working on to be able to send back to this body and the American people—what is actually happening here. The focus of this from the beginning—from the very start—was two simple things: How can we reduce the rates for individuals so they can keep more of their own money and spend their own money, which stimulates the economy? The second aspect was this: How can we simplify the system? There is a lot of back and forth on the final details of it, but those two things are very clear.

This dramatically simplifies the tax structure that we have, and it reduces rates for people, so that people have more of their own money to be able to spend, and businesses have more of their own money to be able to invest in their businesses, to be able to pay their workers more, to be able to buy more equipment, and to be able to expand their businesses. That helps everybody in the economy. Whether you save your money or whether you spend your money, you are able to keep your own money.

So here is what this means for hardworking Americans and, in particular, in my State, for hardworking Oklahomans. Every bracket gets a tax deduction. In fact, as the Tax Foundation studied the Senate plan, going State by State, it looked at the middle-income family in Oklahoma, and the Tax Foundation stated that the middle-income family will have an increase in its take-home pay of \$2,200 over the next year. People will see it in their own paycheck from what is not being withheld anymore, because they are able to keep more of their own money.

The Senate plan doubles the standard deduction. For a single working adult, the first \$12,000 of their money is not taxed at all. For a married couple, \$24,000 of their income is not taxed at all. We also double the Child Tax Credit to \$2,000, directly, to be able to protect the people who need the help the most.

What does that look like for us?

Take an Oklahoma family of four. That typical family of four in my State, with all incomes put together and with two working parents, makes about \$73,000, combining all of their incomes together. That family of four, with \$73,000 of total income for the family, will see a cut in their tax bill of \$2,200 next year. Typically, they pay about \$3,600 in Federal taxes. Next year, they pay \$1,500 in Federal taxes. It is a pretty dramatic shift for them.

Let's take a teacher in Oklahoma who has been teaching for a couple of years—a single mom, a couple of kids, with \$41,000 in total income and trying to make ends meet. That single mom with a couple of kids will see a tax reduction of \$1,400. That is incredibly significant in just her day-to-day life. I can assure you that every Oklahoman would be glad to see an extra \$100 or \$150 in their paycheck every single month. That buys a lot of groceries, and it sure does help.

This is a process that really does affect real people, and it has been lost in the conversations. It has been interesting to hear the debate and all the noise on it.

I am hearing things I am calling tax myths of this bill. The most common one is that it is actually going to increase taxes on those in poverty. So for people who are saying that this is going to increase taxes for those individuals, it does not. It actually does exactly the opposite—not only by reducing rates but by increasing the standard deduction, by increasing the child tax credit. It helps people that need help the most.

I have also heard individuals in the media saying: This is going to hurt people because the individual mandate—something unrelated to tax policy entirely—has been snuck into the tax bill. The individual mandate of the Affordable Care Act is a tax policy that was actually added to a healthcare bill.

So this is a tax bill dealing with the tax aspects that were snuck into the original Obama healthcare bill. How does that work? The individual mandate says: If you don't buy the insurance approved by the folks in Washington, DC, then, you get an extra tax on you.

Where does that tax go? In Oklahoma, 81 percent of the people who pay that extra tax make \$50,000 or less. That extra ObamaCare tax—that penalty that was put on there—was targeted directly at the middle class, and the middle class in Oklahoma pays that fine. Eighty-one percent of the fine that is paid is paid by people making \$50,000 or less, in my State. We want to see that tax rate go down for those individuals, and we want to allow people to have a choice. That is a significant change for those individuals, who not only are trying to make ends meet, but they don't want to see one more tax laid on top of them.

Here is another myth I have heard. The tax cuts for the individuals aren't

permanent. May I remind everyone that the tax changes for the individuals made by the Bush administration had the exact same effect. They had a 10-year life span. As we went out to the end of that 10-year life span, they were then renewed. This is the same type of experience, where this individual tax is put in place, and a future Congress will go back and evaluate: Are all of these tax rates correct? Is this the right formula that should be in place? And they will be able to evaluate them at that time—just like we did in 2011, when those tax rates were made permanent—look at them again, give them that future window, and evaluate: Is this the right direction?

There has been an interesting one I have heard several times by people saying this will hurt teachers and it will hurt schools. I even heard someone this past weekend specifically say: The Senate bill takes away classroom expenses from teachers. The ironic part about that is that the Senate bill actually doubles the deductibility for teachers and classroom expenses. The lie out there is that the Senate bill takes it away. The truth, if you read the bill, is that it actually doubles it so that teachers have twice as much that they can deduct.

Teachers make a limited salary already. The last thing we need to do is to hurt teachers as they are trying to take care of the kids in their own classes. So this doubles the deductibility for teachers for classroom expenses.

It also puts in place an extension of the 529. Many parents set aside a little bit of money every month to go toward their child's college education. This would allow that to also be used for education, if they choose to have those expenses, in kindergarten through 12th grade, as well as college. It increases that opportunity.

The House bill did have a portion in their bill about student loan interest and tuition waiver for graduate students. The Senate actually does not have those two areas, protecting graduate students in their tuition waiver expenses. I think that is important.

There has also been a great myth out there that Republicans are cutting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid with this bill. Can I tell you, there is nothing in this bill about Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. We are not trying to damage or change any of those programs. In fact, it was in one of the hearings just last month where JCT, or the Joint Committee on Taxation, was asked that question directly, and they affirmed that there is nothing in this bill that is trying to change those policies. That is just a myth that is sitting out there.

What we need is a healthy, growing economy. Our economy has been flat for the last 8 years, growing at around 2 percent. Historically, the U.S. economy since World War II has grown at about 3 percent. That little 1 percentage point change may not seem like a

big deal, but that is a lot of jobs across the country. It is increased wages across the country, and it is increased opportunity.

I feel sorry for college graduates who graduated in the past several years because they are trying to land a job in this economy and finding out how difficult it is to get a job. They wonder: Has it always been like that? It has not. Go back just a decade or two decades ago, and people were graduating out of college and landing into great jobs because the economy was growing faster.

If we don't do something to get this economy growing faster again, we will continue to have limited opportunities for all Americans, and people's paychecks will continue to be flat yet another decade. This is a way to nudge the economy, to say: Let's get it going again.

Quite frankly, my Democratic colleagues 8 years ago passed a \$1 trillion stimulus package and said that is what would nudge the economy, but the economy didn't budge at all. This is an opportunity to come back and say: Let's actually do this right, not having the government spend your money but allowing you to keep more of your money and allowing the free market—just from people spending, buying, and saving—to lift the economy. That lift makes a tremendous difference.

One last interesting conversation. There have been a lot of folks who talked about deficit or debt effects in this bill, that this bill could be up to \$1 trillion in addition to the deficit. This is typical Washington speak and the challenge of serving here in Washington.

There are 130 economists that looked at this. All turned in reports. Everybody has a different outlook. Economists study hard, they look at the numbers, and they run their models, but everyone is guessing, and I get that. They are educated guesses, but they are all guesses. It is the responsibility of us here, in this Chamber, to look at the models, to look at the study, and to determine: Does this work?

For instance, JCT in their study said there will be about a half trillion in deficit because of this bill. But what they didn't take into account, when you look at their actual numbers, is any real increase in international funding—any increase in our American businesses that do business here in America and across the ocean. That is not really taken into account in theirs.

They also don't look at tremendous swaths of our economy because they don't have that in their model. But the JCT estimates that we will have half a trillion dollars in deficit spending. As I mentioned before, over the last 10 years, our economy is stuck at less than 2 percent GDP growth. In the context of the Senate bill, current policy assumes that tax extenders expire, meaning we start with a \$500 billion headwind. Our tax bill should not have

to cover the effects of current policy extensions. The \$1 trillion gap that is left equates to around 0.4 percent increase in GDP over the 10-year budget window. CBO's current GDP baseline is 1.9 over 10, and given the pro-growth policies in our bill, we should fully expect to a .4 percent boost, getting us to 2.3 percent, which closes the deficit gap, and brings future growth much more in line with where we should be historically.

Moreover, by JCT's own admission, eight one-hundredths of a percent could yield \$500 billion in dynamic economic growth. So using those numbers, sixteen one-hundredths in boosted GDP should provide the sufficient revenue to cover any shortfall.

The focus of this is that, when you look at the studies and you ask the questions, they all have very conservative estimates—as they should, as economists. But if our economy even goes up to maybe 2.5 percent—so a half percentage point, which is typical for us—we are far in the black.

I understand that it is always a risk. My Democratic colleagues took a risk 8 years ago when they spent almost \$1 trillion in the stimulus package, saying: I hope this works. And it did not.

I understand it is a risk, but I think it is an appropriate risk, to be able to say: Let's allow Americans to keep more of their own money to invest in this economy on the risk that we grow the economy by 0.2 percent more to be able to break even. I think the American economy can grow much faster than that. She has for decades, up until the last decade. Let's get us back to our old normal and allow that to be our new normal.

There are a lot of questions on the tax policy, rightfully so. It is important to all of us. Let's get it right, but let's keep moving. Over the next couple of weeks, this body, along with Members of the House, will do a conference committee. It is a back-and-forth about how we resolve the differences between the House bill and the Senate bill. When that is done, it will have to pass the House, pass the Senate, and go to the President's desk.

In the days ahead, Americans will see the changes in their own paycheck as they see the rates go down and are able to keep more of their own money. The rates of the median family are set to go down by 60 percent in this bill. It will be a tremendous benefit to them. I think that opportunity is one we shouldn't miss.

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

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

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as you know, and many do, 16 years ago I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act was written to cover young people, brought to the United States by their parents, who have grown up in this country but do not have legal status. They are undocumented. Some of them don't learn that until they are in high school or later. They think they are Americans. They have gone to school with a lot of American kids. They pledge allegiance to the flag. They sing our national anthem. They truly believed they were Americans and didn't learn until later in life that they had overstayed their visas. Their parents had overstayed their visas, is probably a better description, and that has affected their legal situation.

So I introduced this bill—a simple bill—that reads, if you have children in America who are caught up in that circumstance, we will give them a chance to get legal. They didn't make the decision to come here in the first place, but they ought to have a chance to become legal in America and become citizens. That is what the DREAM Act said, and we set up certain standards.

How do you become legal in America?

First, if you have a serious criminal record, goodbye. We don't want you. We don't need you. Second, if you are not going to finish school and are going to drop out, sorry, there is no future for you in this country—or a limited future. Third, would you consider serving in our U.S. military as a way of proving that you want to be a part of America's future? We set that up with the DREAM Act.

Time passed, and we didn't pass the bill. One of my colleagues in the Senate went on to be elected President of the United States, Barack Obama.

I reached out to him and asked: Mr. President, can you figure out a way to protect these young people who are subject to deportation through no fault of their own? He did. He came up with an Executive order called the DACA Program.

Under the DACA Program, young people, like those I described, came forward. They paid a \$500 filing fee, then went through a criminal background check to make sure they had no problems, and they submitted their information. Each of them was given a 2-year renewable protection plan so they could live in America, not be deported, and be able to legally work.

What happened to those people? There were 780,000 of them who showed up, paid the fee, and got the protection under the DACA Program.

Then came a Presidential campaign—the last one—in which Donald Trump, as candidate for President, said: I am going to get rid of this DACA Program. I think it is wrong. It never should have been done by Executive order.

He said that and then was elected and set out to do it. Last September 5, he did just that. It was announced by

the Attorney General of the United States. They said that by March 5 of 2018, the program would end.

What it means is, today and every day, more and more of these protected young people fall out of protection—about 120 a day. There are 10,000 of them who were protected by DACA who can now be deported, and the number will continue to grow until March 5, when the President said the program should end—when 1,000 young people a day in America will lose DACA protection, be subject to deportation, and will not be able to legally work.

When he eliminated the DACA Program on September 5, President Trump said to us: I challenge Congress. Do what you are supposed to do. Pass a law to take care of this.

I accepted that challenge, and I joined with Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, the Republican of South Carolina. We introduced the Dream Act. We are ready to pass the Dream Act. I think there are the votes on the floor to pass the Dream Act.

Some of my Republican friends have said to me: We support it, but we want a show of good faith on your part that you will strengthen our border operations to reduce others from coming into this country.

I said: Sign me up. As a Democrat, I will join with you as a Republican to fund things that are sensible, realistic, and effective to take our tax dollars and make our borders safer. I accept that.

Now we are in a position in which the President's challenge has really come to the spot where we have to do something. We are going to leave here by December 22 to go home and enjoy the holidays. If we do not fix this problem before we leave, imagine what that will mean to these 780,000 young people. They don't know what their futures are going to hold.

Who are they?

There are 20,000 of them who teach in grade schools and middle schools and high schools across the United States—20,000 of these DACA-protected young people. When they lose their right to legally work in America, they are finished as teachers—finished, out the door. These are 20,000 teachers who could be lost.

In addition, there are students who are in a pretty tricky situation. About 30 of them go to the Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine in Chicago. They won the competition to be accepted at that medical school because Loyola, unlike other medical schools, said they will open competition to DACA-eligible people. Some of them are the most brilliant kids in America who never dreamed that, in being undocumented, they could make it to medical school. They have. They are doing well.

There is a problem. You cannot finish medical school and move on to where you want to be unless you complete a residency after medical school. The residency is actually a job—a job in-

volving a lot of hours in hospitals learning to be a doctor. All doctors go through it, and these medical students would go through it as well except, if they lose DACA protection, they cannot legally work; therefore, they cannot even apply to be residents and complete their medical educations. Our failure to act, our delay in acting, jeopardizes their medical educations.

Do we have a surplus of doctors in the United States? No. The AMA tells us just the opposite. Across Illinois, I can point to communities downstate and to neighborhoods in the Chicago area that are desperately in need of doctors. Can we waste a medical student at Loyola's medical school because the Senate is just too darned busy to take it up?

Does it look to the Presiding Officer like the Senate is too busy to take up an issue like this? The fact is, we have done precious little this year, and we have plenty of time. It is also a reality that a lot of people are watching carefully to see if we do our job.

A long time ago, I started coming to the floor of the Senate, telling the story of these Dreamers—the stories of these people who are protected by DACA. I can give the greatest speech in the world, and people will yawn, but when I tell them the stories of these lives and these people, it changes the conversation. They come to understand who they are and why this is critically important. Today is kind of a milestone. This is the 100th story I have told on the floor of the U.S. Senate. They are all in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for those who want to take a look at them.

It is the story of another one of these Dreamers. His story is particularly compelling. This is his photo.

His name is Kyungmin Cho. Kyungmin Cho was 7 years old when his family brought him from Seoul, South Korea, to the United States. He grew up in New Jersey.

From a young age, he was quite a good student and active in his community. In high school, he took multiple advanced placement courses. He was Vice President of the National Honor Society and president of his class. Here is a picture of him at his high school graduation. In high school, Kyungmin was a member of the Math and Science Academy and a member of the varsity track and field team. He was a volunteer at his church, and he taught summer school. At the same time, he was working over 40 hours a week.

You see, these kids, these young people—Dreamers—don't get Federal Government loans or Pell Grants so they have to work extra time to get the money to go to school. He worked 40 hours a week in a restaurant to help support his family and pay for his education. Now he is a student at Temple University's Fox School of Business and Management. He is studying accounting in the Honors Program. He continues to work two restaurant jobs a week for nearly 40 hours to help his

family, but, last year, something else happened that was significant in his life.

Kyungmin Cho, an undocumented student in America, was allowed to enlist in the U.S. Army. The program he enlisted in is called The Military Accessions Vital to National Interest Program. It is known by the acronym MAVNI. This program allows immigrants like Kyungmin, with special skills “vital to the national interest,” to enlist in our Armed Forces. More than 900 DACA recipients with these skills, just like Kyungmin, have joined the military. They took the oath. They said they were willing to die for this country and serve in our military.

Some Trump administration officials have claimed that DACA recipients are taking jobs away from Americans, but Kyungmin and hundreds of others have vital skills that our military just couldn't find in other places.

Kyungmin, with many other Dreamers, is now waiting to ship out to basic training. He continues his undergraduate studies and works full time as he waits for a chance to serve the United States of America. He is willing to risk his life for a country that doesn't recognize him as a legal resident.

He wrote me a letter, which reads:

DACA means everything to me. It gives me the opportunity to work and support myself. . . . It is with great pride that I call myself American even though my status says otherwise.

I recently visited the Phoenix Military Academy, one of the six military academies that is part of the Chicago Public School System. I am proud to say Chicago Public Schools hosts the largest Junior ROTC Program in America, with 10,000 cadets. You ought to see them marching at the Memorial Day Parade—just wave after wave of these uniformed, young high school students. It turns out that many of these cadets are Dreamers who want to do just what Kyungmin has done—volunteer to enlist in the U.S. military.

How can you question this man's commitment to America if he is willing to die for this country? How many kids in high school would step up with that kind of courage? He has demonstrated, and others have, too, that they can give a lot to our country.

Without DACA, if it ends March 5, it is over for Kyungmin and 900 others who have volunteered to serve our Nation. They are finished. They cannot continue their service to America, even though the skills they bring are necessarily vital to our national interests. For the thousands of Junior ROTC cadets in Chicago who drill every day and take this seriously, it is over for them too. There is no avenue left for them to step forward and serve our Nation.

Would America be better if we deported Kyungmin back to South Korea—a country he may not even remember? Will we be a stronger country if we lose this kind of courage and this kind of commitment of a young man

who is willing to risk his life for a country that does not legally recognize him as part of its population?

In a few weeks, we are going to get to go home for the holidays. I am looking forward to it. I really am. It is a big holiday for my family, and I am sure it is for many others. Can we really go home and enjoy our families, knowing we have not answered the most basic question that the President said to us on September 5, when he asked: Can Congress act? Can you pass a law? Can you solve a problem? That is what it comes down to when it is DACA and the Dreamers.

When I introduced the Dream Act with Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, the Republican of South Carolina, he said: The moment of reckoning is coming.

He is right. LINDSEY is right. It is a moment of reckoning for this young man. More importantly, it is a moment of reckoning for this Senate as to whether we are serious about why we were elected. If we cannot solve this basic problem in a matter of days and weeks, shame on us. We are not overworked, for goodness' sake. We are just not inspired to do it at this point, and we need to be inspired to do it.

We shouldn't do to this young man and to the thousands of others who count on us the unacceptable and walk away from our responsibility. Now is the time, before the end of this year, to let this young man know, when he is called to serve our country—and to proudly do so—that we have done everything we can to clear his path.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

REMEMBERING BOATSWAIN'S MATE SECOND CLASS JOSEPH LEON GEORGE

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I rise to honor the heroism of Boatswain's Mate Second Class Joseph Leon George.

On December 7, 1941, 26-year-old Joe George served as a crew member aboard the USS *Vestal*, a repair ship that was moored next to the USS *Arizona* at Pearl Harbor. The attack on Pearl Harbor was a history-defining event for our Nation, one we humbly observe each year to remember and honor the 2,403 Americans who perished.

On that day, Joe George, along with so many other courageous heroes, would take swift and decisive action, putting his own life on the line to save sailors whom he had never met and would never know.

When the USS *Arizona* was attacked, the forward ammunition magazine of the ship exploded—we have all seen that very famous photograph of the *Arizona*—and engulfed countless sailors in the inferno. Joe George, from his post on the nearby repair boat, recognized six badly burned sailors who were trapped in the control tower on the *Arizona*'s main mast, with no escape options available.

Despite the fact that he was ordered to cut the line—to cut the rope—between the *Vestal* and the sinking *Arizona*, Joe relentlessly heaved a line, over and over, which spanned a distance of almost 80 feet between the two ships, until Joe was finally able to reach the sailors with his rope.

Joe's selfless actions saved six sailors who would have otherwise perished in the flames on the USS *Arizona* that day. While two of those six would succumb to their injuries shortly thereafter, the remaining four survivors have Joe to thank for their lives.

Amidst all the chaos that day, Joe George was never identified as the sailor who threw that lifeline. In fact, the four survivors diligently sought for information to recognize the man whom they were never able to thank—Joe George, the person who saved their lives.

It wasn't until 36 years later that the unknown sailor would be acknowledged when Joe George conducted an interview with the University of North Texas on August 5, 1978. Joe George contributed his experiences while serving during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor as part of the university's oral history for the “Day of Infamy.”

This was the first time Joe would speak of the event, confirmed by his ship log records, commanding officer's remarks, and, most importantly, the two living survivors that have Joe to thank for their lives.

Joe's actions that day, which we find hard to match words that do it justice, are nothing short of what an American hero is in servitude, dedication, and sacrifice.

While the years of searching for Joe and establishing the basis for proper recognition do not go unappreciated, it is with great respect and admiration that we take a moment to honor this distinguished sailor's actions so long ago.

The specific events of December 7, 1941, 76 years ago today, continue to age with each passing year, but the memories and stories of heroes like Joe thrive as our Nation reflects in humility and gratitude.

It is with great respect that I recognize this time today to honor Joe George. Some 76 years ago today, Joe's actions saved six sailors.

Today Joe's family will receive the Navy Bronze Star for Valor at the remembrance ceremony at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. This is the first time a medal has been presented on the Memorial of the USS *Arizona*.

I was honored to work with Colorado Springs resident Donald Stratton to solidify this honor for Joe George. Don is one of the sailors who was saved, and he has been fighting for decades to make sure this day of recognition would take place. So 76 years later, we culminate the work of Don Stratton's mission to commemorate the man who the Stratton family has everything to be thankful for.

I am beyond words with excitement to be part of this momentous occasion

with so many others who worked tirelessly over the years to make this happen. My hope is that Joe's valiant story joins the permanent foundation of our Nation's history for future generations to recognize, understand, and appreciate the sacrifice of the countless heroes who have come before them.

I had the incredible privilege of spending Veterans Day just a few weeks ago with Donald Stratton and his family in Colorado Springs. I was in his living room as he and his wife shared their experiences together.

Donald Stratton talked about what it was like to be on fire with five of his shipmates shimmying across that rope to the vessel and to their freedom, to their safety.

I was in that living room on Veterans Day when the family received a phone call from the Colorado Springs City Council, naming a bridge in honor of Donald Stratton. I saw the exuberance and joy that the family shared at that recognition.

Donald Stratton's service didn't end at Pearl Harbor. After a year in the hospital, he would return to the Pacific to fight in mission after mission.

Now, 76 years later, Donald Stratton's last mission is complete with the recognition of the man who saved his life.

I want to read a letter that will be presented at the memorial service at Pearl Harbor where Joe George, the hero who saved so many lives, will be awarded the Bronze Star.

Dear Mr. Stratton and the George family, Dawn broke seven decades ago on this day to a world at war. The peaceful waters of this harbor churned in violent reaction to a vicious attack that changed forever the course of our nation. You know, you were here. All of you here today are united as families, soldiers, sailors and airmen through blood and sacrifice of so many who gave so much.

The recognition of Joe George is an exclamation point to the thousands of servicemembers on the U.S.S. Arizona and the men he saved, and the families that exist today—

Who are celebrating in Pearl Harbor today—

because of his heroic actions. This has been a long time coming, a last mission for rightful recognition. As the days march forward so too have far too many of our World War II veterans—please know that your work to achieve this one last salute to courage proves that you will never be forgotten. These still waters will ripple for eternity in awe of your tireless and unyielding dedication to this great country.

On August 15, 1945 my grandfather stationed in France wrote a letter to his family that started with these words, "Aha, that day, 14 August, is indeed a history making day, and last night at twelve o'clock when at last all the rumors were confirmed that the world was at peace I said a silent prayer and know that it won't be long until we are all together again." To all who are present today in spirit and in person—you are making history, bringing our nation together once again, as this final mission is accomplished giving due recognition for valor in combat, for heroic and meritorious service. In the words of Donald Stratton, on December 7, 1941, "Everybody had to be somewhere." Today's ceremony reminds our na-

tion of how truly blessed we are because you were here.

Mr. President, this is very well likely the last memorial service at Pearl Harbor that will have survivors of the USS *Arizona* in attendance, and I hope that Americans across the country will take the time to reflect on the greatness of so many who have left us behind now but who left us a country that we can be so proud of. We have enjoyed 76 years of freedom thanks to them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The Senator from Georgia.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, last week the Senate finally broke through the gridlock and voted to change our archaic Tax Code once and for all. It only took 31 years to get here.

As to regulatory relief, so far this year this body and this administration have removed 860 regulations and rules, from the rule book here in Washington, that had been sucking the very life out of our free enterprise system over the last 8 years or so. But along with regulatory relief and unleashing our energy potential, this is the single most important thing we can do to unleash our economic growth and bring relief to American workers. These changes to the Tax Code are a win for American families, American workers, and American businesses.

Let me give just a couple of examples. A family of four that makes a median income today of \$73,000 a year will see their tax bill go down by \$2,200 a month. That is a 60-percent reduction in their Federal income taxes. A single payer, a single mom with one child, making the median income, will get a 75-percent tax cut. The standard deduction is doubled. The child care credit is doubled to \$2,000. The individual mandate that was unleashed on the American people by ObamaCare is eliminated.

By the way, just in 2014 alone—that is the latest year we have any official record from the IRS—this insidious mandate fined 8 million Americans \$2 billion. The irony of that is that almost half of those people make less than \$25,000 a year.

In addition to those changes, the one I love and the one my mother and father will love—they were public school teachers—is that the teacher expense deduction has been doubled under this bill. In addition, 6 million taxpayers have been removed from the Federal income tax roll. That is just the half of it.

Businesses see their corporate tax rate go from 35 percent to 20 percent, allowing them to create jobs here in America and expand production and compete with the rest of the world. Due to our archaic repatriation tax, we are the last country in the world to have a double tax on profits made by U.S. companies around the world. That is \$2.6 trillion, by some estimates, that

we hope will be reinvested here in the United States.

According to outside analysts, this bill creates 1 million new jobs, and the average compensation of the average family in America should go up by \$4,000—some estimate as high as \$9,000 per year.

The GDP only has to go from 1.9 percent to 2.1 percent to more than pay for all of this. That is not my estimate. That is the estimate of the Joint Committee on Tax. If you don't believe them, then, the Congressional Budget Office, with which we have all kinds of problems, say that we only have to grow the economy 0.4 percent. So anywhere from 1.9 to 2.3 percent growth would more than pay for this investment in the American worker. I would argue, because of the last two quarters, that we are already seeing 3 percent growth, primarily, because of the expectation that we are going to act on tax and because of the reality of the fact that we have been moving on the regulatory regime that has been perpetrated on the American worker these last 8 years.

There are a lot of benefits, but in my opinion the person who benefits from this tax bill the most is that person in America who gets a job.

When it comes to the corporate rate, I personally have seen firsthand how important it is to have a rate that allows American workers to compete with their counterparts around the world. The most stimulative part of this tax bill, in my opinion, is this corporate tax cut, because of the impact it will have on our businesses and workers and because it creates a level playing field with the rest of the world.

Let's be very clear. My original goal was 15 percent because I know this is a dynamic situation, where the rest of the world today is going to move because of what we are doing.

Both the House and the Senate agreed on 20 percent. Now there is some talk about changing it in conference. My question is this. The House approved 20 percent and the Senate approved 20 percent. The purpose of this conference is to work between those two decisions to find the differences and mull those into a finer bill that both the House and Senate can vote on. My question for this body and for this conference is this: What is between 20 and 20? I don't understand. This should be a no-brainer.

The best thing we can do for people in the United States who work with their hands—these are people who punch a timeclock, just like I did when I was working my way through college—is to create a level playing field for the rest of the world and lower the corporate tax rate. The current rate sends jobs overseas and keeps our workers from competing on a level playing field. We have the best workforce in the history of the world, and yet we have hamstrung them such that other companies can come to the United States and buy our companies

and take those jobs overseas. We need to get this tax rate competitive and as low as possible. Otherwise, other countries will immediately lower their rates, and we will still be at a significant disadvantage.

If we don't take bold action right now, we may not get the chance to do so again for another 30 years. We need to make sure we don't get outpaced by other countries, even after we make these tax changes.

Let me just describe why this is so important. Today, the U.S. tax rate is 35 percent. Asia right now averages about 18 percent. Europe is about 20 percent. So if we go to 20 percent, the rest of the world is going to move. We already know that the United Kingdom is moving to 15 percent. Others are talking about moving as well. We have a 50-percent differential. That difference allows other countries to come into this country, buy our companies and use that tax differential to pay for part of the acquisition costs. What that does is it takes jobs overseas and actually thwarts our ability to compete. Because of this reality, because of this 50-percent differential, there are twice as many foreign companies buying U.S. companies, both C corporations and passthroughs, as there are U.S. companies buying foreign companies. We simply have to change that.

Let me give you some examples of how competitive and how dynamic this issue about the corporate tax rate is. Germany today has a 16 percent tax rate; that compares to our 35 percent top tax rate. The UK today is 19 percent, but as I said earlier, they have already announced that they are going to 17 percent next year. France and the Netherlands have also announced that they are going to take rates lower next year.

When the UK goes to 17 percent, France lowers theirs, the Netherlands lowers theirs—Germany is already sitting right there at 16 percent—if we increase this corporate tax rate from what we have already agreed to in our negotiations in this body, then we will replicate the 50-percent differential with the rest of the world almost immediately, so we will have accomplished nothing.

The greatest burden on the American worker, again, is this corporate tax rate of 35 percent. It is estimated that every 1 percent drop in the corporate tax rate could mean roughly 30,000 new jobs in an economy that is \$30 billion larger. We can't afford to play around with this corporate tax rate that we have already agreed on. It is time to stop that debate.

All of these changes in the Tax Code, though, were meant to lift up Americans, simply put. It is the family who will benefit from this. It is the individual who is trying to get an education, get that first job. It is those people who are going to retire and depend on a robust Federal Government to take care of them in their retirement. But right now, with this debt

crisis, we are losing the ability to do the right thing.

Members of both sides of the aisle have previously supported many of these changes to the Tax Code. There was no reason to vote no on this bill, and there is no reason not to support them now. The United States made history the other night at about 2 a.m. on Saturday morning by approving this plan. We now have certain individuals from this body and the House who will go into a conference, and they will work out the differences between the House bill and the Senate bill. That is called democracy, and I am looking forward to seeing that bill come back to this body. We must not lose sight about what this is all about—to bring relief to Americans and help us become more competitive. We cannot take this standard of living for granted.

This body is great at spending money, but right now every dollar we spend of discretionary money, by definition, is borrowed money. This can no longer be the case. This tax bill is clearly an investment in our future.

I am not embarrassed to say that I believe in capitalism. Capitalism is what has made this country different from any other country in the world so far. Right now, the economic miracle of this past century is based on three simple things: innovation, capital formation, and the rule of law. That, combined with the best workforce in the history of the world, has created this economic miracle. Yet we sit here today where my children, the next generation, will be the first generation in the history of our country to face lower economic prospects than the generation before them. That does not have to be the case. It is up to this body to stand up and do what is right for the next generation. This is a critical part—don't miss this—this is a critical part of solving our debt crisis. This is the least we owe to our children and our children's children.

We must continue doing all we can to make sure that we put this tax bill on President Trump's desk before Christmas. Our children and our children's children's futures depend on it.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, let me tell you a story. Yesterday, I was in Nashville, and I went to Chick-fil-a on Charlotte Avenue about 2 p.m. in the afternoon, and I ordered six chicken nuggets, some mac and cheese, and some waffle fries. I was about to leave, and a lady walked up to me and said: Senator, thank you for what you are doing to help me with insurance.

I said: Well, what do you mean?

She said: My name is Marty Parish. I am a self-employed farmer, and the year before ObamaCare started, my monthly insurance premium was \$300.

Next year, it is \$1,300, and that is very hard for me to afford.

I said: I guess you are one of those Americans who work hard and you don't get any government subsidy to help you pay for your health insurance.

She said: That is exactly right. I have to pay for the whole thing myself.

I said: Well, Marty Parish, I have a Christmas present for you. The Congress can pass, by the end of the month, legislation that would lower your premiums in the year 2019 by 18 percent. That is according to Avalere, one of the country's leading health consulting firms, which made the announcement yesterday.

So if your premiums are \$1,300 a month, that is a couple of thousand dollars less that you will have to pay, and that is still way too high. If the Senate and the House agree on a tax bill that removes the individual mandate and the Congressional Budget Office is right, that will put some upward pressure on those same rates but only 10 percent. She was still going to get an 8-percent decrease in her rates in 2019, and that is about \$1,000 in her pocket. Those are real dollars.

Marty Parish has seen, if she is like the average Tennessean, her premiums rise 176 percent over the last 5 years, and she has seen them go up an average this year of 58 percent more. So a very good Christmas present for Marty Parish and men and women like her across this country would be for this Congress, before the end of the month, to pass what we call the Alexander-Murray and the Collins-Nelson legislation, which will lower premiums by 18 percent. More than that, that Christmas present, which is all wrapped up in a nice package and sitting in the White House, waiting for anybody who wants to consider it—according to the Congressional Budget Office, it will not just reduce premiums, but it will reduce the amount of Federal tax dollars that go to pay for ObamaCare subsidies. If the premiums are lower, the subsidies are going to be lower. And if the premiums are lower and the subsidies are lower, then the Federal debt is going to be lower.

So here you have, for my friend whom I met yesterday at Chick-fil-a, an 18-percent, on average, reduction in her 2019 insurance premiums. Fewer of her tax dollars are going to pay for Affordable Care Act subsidies, and there will be less Federal debt for her and her family. Because the President has said that he will not put up with it and because Senator MURRAY, the Democrat who is ranking on the HELP Committee, and I agree on this, there will be no bailout of insurance companies in these proposals.

Who would support something like this? Well, President Trump supports it. He told us that last week. In fact, he asked for it. He called me specifically a few weeks ago and said: I don't want people hurt in the next 2 years while we are still debating what to do in the long term about health insurance. Why

don't you work with Senator MURRAY and see if you can put together a bill that keeps people from being hurt and that stabilizes the market so premiums don't go up so much?

I said: Mr. President, we are already working on that.

I have talked with him half a dozen times about that. I met with him at the White House, talked to him the other day, and he has said publicly and privately that he supports the Alexander-Murray legislation, and he supports the legislation supported by Senator COLLINS, a Republican, and Senator NELSON, a Democrat. So that is a pretty big one.

Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican majority leader, supports it. He has said that publicly and privately. He supports both of them.

Senator SCHUMER, who is the Democratic leader, said 2 or 3 weeks ago that every single Democrat in the Senate would vote for Alexander-Murray and that it had 60 votes, and Senator MCCONNELL should put it on the floor as soon as possible. He thought it would pass with a lot of votes.

Well, the bill hasn't changed except in one way. It has gotten better from the point of view not just of Democrats but of Republicans.

The idea that Senator COLLINS and Senator NELSON have come up with is the idea of creating an invisible risk pool or a reinsurance fund. To allow States to do that would permit those States to do what Maine has done, what Alaska has done, and what Minnesota is trying to do, and it is this: Alaska created such a fund; they call it a reinsurance fund. Maine calls it an invisible risk pool. They put money into taking care of the very sick people in the individual market in Alaska, and once they did that, well, they were able to lower rates for everybody else by 20 percent. That is in addition to the 18 percent that Avalere talked about in our bill—in addition to that. Maine did a similar thing in a little different way in their State.

Who else likes this idea? Well, Republicans in the House of Representatives like it. They, of course, are a full partner in this exercise. They will have to consider it and decide whether they are for it, but I think it would be pretty easy for them to support Collins-Nelson because it was in the repeal-and-replace bill for the Affordable Care Act that the House passed and voted for. In fact, the so-called compromise by Representative MEADOWS and Representative MCCARTHY included an invisible risk pool of up to \$15 billion to allow States—this is pretty good Republican philosophy—to make their own decisions about doing this and decide, as Maine did, Alaska did, and as Minnesota is trying to do, to say that we are going to create this fund, and we are going to take care of the very sick people who use most of the money we spend on healthcare. When we do that, we lower the rates for everybody else. In the Alaska case, because it low-

ered the rates for everybody else, again, premiums went down, subsidies went down, and Alaska was able to pay for 85 percent of its reinsurance fund with Federal dollars without any new Federal dollars going to Alaska. That is what happens when you allow States to use their own good judgment, and that is why Senator COLLINS, a Republican, and Senator BILL NELSON, a Democrat, have suggested it over here.

The other thing that the House of Representatives did in its Republican replace-and-replace bill was continue the cost-sharing payments for 2 years. Cost-sharing payments are payments that the Federal Government makes so that low-income Americans will not have to make them when they buy their insurance. It makes them to the insurance companies, but the benefit from the lower rates is supposed to go to the individual consumer or to the taxpayer.

The House of Representatives, in its repeal-and-replace bill, understood—just as the distinguished Presiding Officer Senator CASSIDY, Senator GRAHAM, and Senator JOHNSON understood—that if they are able to repeal and replace ObamaCare or make any significant major changes in it, it will take a couple of years to put it in place, and you don't want people to be hurt in the meantime. That is exactly what the President said to me when he called me a few weeks ago. He said: I don't want people hurt during this 2-year period.

So the House of Representatives put into their repeal-and-replace bill 2 years of cost-sharing payments, not to bail out insurance companies. It doesn't bail out insurance companies. The benefits go to individuals. They wanted to make sure that rates stayed down and people didn't get hurt.

The proposals we are talking about, the Christmas present I talked about to the young farmer in Tennessee—both have fundamentally been a part of the House repeal-and-replace bill. While I can't speak for the House of Representatives—what they do is their business—I believe as they study Alexander-Murray and Collins-Nelson, they will find that they like it because they have already voted for it once this year. The House of Representatives created the invisible risk pool. That was a real breakthrough in their ability to pass a bill. Then, second, they wanted to make sure that during this interim—the time we try to change the individual insurance market in this country—people aren't hurt.

So I have come to the floor today just to say that there is a lot going on today and next week. It involves defense spending. It involves the amount of money we can spend for the next year in our government. It involves a tax bill. The Senator from Georgia has just talked about it—a historic tax bill that I hope we can pass. But there is also an opportunity for every single one of us to give a Christmas present to the 9 million Americans who have

been hammered by skyrocketing insurance premiums.

We don't need to debate whose fault that is. I don't need to say it is all the fault of the Affordable Care Act. Democrats don't need to say it is President Trump's sabotaging it. Let's forget that for a moment. Let's just say that the fact is, in Tennessee, premiums will go up in 2018 by 58 percent, and they are going to go up more the next year if we don't do something about it.

We have two bills here that will say to the self-employed farmer in Tennessee or Iowa or Louisiana or the songwriter or the small business woman: We hear you. We know you can't afford these rates. If you are paying \$1,300 a month for two of you, that is way too high.

We can begin to take those rates down—according to Avalere, 18 percent in 2019. According to the Congressional Budget Office, if we don't take this action to pass the cost-sharing payments, rates will go up 25 percent. So if the present we have includes lower premiums, less debt, less money going to ObamaCare subsidies, and it doesn't bail out insurance companies, why should we not pass that? I think we will pass it.

I think it would be pretty hard to explain—I don't want to run into Marti Parish at Chick-fil-A in Nashville between Christmas and New Year's and say: I am sorry about that Christmas present. I could have lowered your rates 18 percent, and I could have done it in a way that didn't run up our Federal debt. I just couldn't get it done.

She would say to me: Wasn't the President for it?

I would say: Yes.

Hasn't the House already voted for that once?

I would say: Yes.

Didn't the Democratic leader say the Democrats were for it?

I would say: Yes.

She would say: Then why didn't it pass?

I would have a hard time coming up with an answer to that.

I hope that over the next few days, we are able to do what Democrats and Republicans have suggested and what 12 Democratic Senators and 12 Republican Senators have offered to this Senate in Alexander-Murray and what Senator COLLINS and Senator NELSON have offered in Collins-Nelson. Both ideas are very much like two provisions already voted on this year by the House of Representatives.

Let's realize that it is the Christmas season. A very nice Christmas present for 9 million hard-working Americans who don't get any government help to pay for their skyrocketing health insurance premiums would be to pass these bills into law so they can count on insurance premiums in 2019 that are, on average, 18 percent lower.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

DACA

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today as a voice for 800,000 young men and women who are counting on all of us to pass the Dream Act. We can't wait because they can't wait. Every day that passes is another day they are forced to keep their lives on hold. Right now, hundreds of thousands of young people in this country are deferring their dreams of finishing a college degree, of becoming a doctor, buying a home, raising a family, starting a small business, or serving in our military—all because President Trump pulled the plug on the DACA Program 3 months ago.

Imagine that feeling of waking up day after day without any certainty about what comes next. Imagine that the country you love—the country where you grew up, where you are part of the community, where you pay your taxes, where you spend your time, your energy, and your money—will not commit to uphold this promise to you. That is just wrong.

Dreamers were brought to this country as children—some of them so young, they don't even remember it—and holding up their futures or sending them to a country they have never known makes no sense for them or for our country. It doesn't do anything to solve our broken immigration system, and it certainly doesn't reflect a country of opportunity or promise—something the United States has always aspired to.

My colleagues have been sharing stories from their States. Here are a few from my home State of Washington—just a few. I have heard so many in recent months.

Not long ago, I was in Tacoma, and I visited a community organization that has actually helped hundreds of men and women get enrolled in the DACA Program, including a woman named Adriana. She has always been a strong student. As early as middle school, she was representing her school district in statewide math and science competitions. Now, after becoming a certified nursing assistant, she is a program manager supervising others. Letting the DACA Program collapse would be a huge setback for Adriana and would end her authorization and her ability to work as a nursing assistant.

I heard from a sophomore at my alma mater, Washington State University, who was brought here to this country at the age of 9. Thanks to the DACA Program, she was able to get a job helping adults with disabilities, which has allowed her to pay for college tuition and support herself. She is a full-time student with a part-time job and still finds time to volunteer in her community. She is on track to graduate in 2019. She dreams of owning her own company someday.

I heard from another DACA recipient who owns a business in Washington State. He said that his college degree from the University of Washington—which he completed without any Fed-

eral funding, by the way, no help at all—symbolized one of his great life challenges. And, as he noted, he is now using his education, his skills, his earnings, and his taxes to contribute to the U.S. economy. He wrote: “This country is my home.”

The thought that this country would slam the door shut on him or any other Dreamer after all they have put in their communities and our country is so backward. That is why we Senators who are elected to work for the people and address the big issues facing the country need to act.

I urge my Republican colleagues to consider the stories you heard from your own States. Think about the communities you represent and the young men and women who are studying and working and starting businesses in the communities you travel to and live in. Show them that President Trump's reckless, divisive agenda does not represent you, your party, or your own State. Work with Democrats to stand for the Dreamers in your district, who are unsure if they can keep their job at a hospital or as a firefighter or serve in our military to fight for our freedoms, who are unsure if they can stay in the only country they have known as home and remain with loved ones.

We need the help of every Member to push back against the policies and the rhetoric that hurt our friends and our neighbors, our coworkers, our students, and our loved ones, because, to paraphrase Dr. King, we know that only our light can drive out the dark forces of bigotry and division in this country.

I thank the countless DACA recipients who have bravely shared their stories in letters, in person, and at rallies across our country. I know it cannot be easy to speak up in these uncertain times, but I want Dreamers to know that there are a lot of us here in Congress and across the country who are inspired by your courage and resilience. We stand with you, and we will not stop until we get this across the finish line.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO MAX MENDEZ

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, it is my honor to announce our latest Granite Stater of the Month, an inspiring, resilient, and generous young man from Merrimack, NH.

Max Mendez, an 8-year-old boy—also known as Mighty Max and Professor Max—has battled leukemia for over a year, and he has proven to be a shining example of the values that make the

Granite State and all of our communities strong.

As Max began treatment last year—procedures, blood draws, and tests—at Boston Children's Hospital, he was often recognized for his courage and grit. The hospital had a supply of toys, and after these procedures, he would often be rewarded with one of them.

Max received so many toys that he started to donate some of them to other kids and realized that giving toys felt even better than receiving them.

In the face of his own severe health challenges, Max started Mighty Max's Mega Toy Drive to help supply Jimmy Fund Clinic, the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, and Boston Children's Hospital's hematology and oncology unit with presents for brave young patients like himself.

In true Granite State fashion, Max and his family received invaluable support from their community, including friends, local businesses, schools, sports teams, and the local police department.

Max's community donated toys, offered spaces, collection sites, and delivered donations to Max and the Mendez family. With extra help from his sister, Mckayla, and the Lyna family, who helped advertise the toy drive and store donations, Mighty Max's Mega Toy Drive received roughly 3,000 toys ahead of the holiday season this year.

Mighty Max, the Mendez family, and all of the Granite Staters who supported the toy drive demonstrate the spirit that makes New Hampshire such a strong, resilient State.

While battling leukemia and enduring painful treatments, Max found it in himself to bring joy to others who face similar challenges. His entire community, including people Max will never meet, is stronger because of his generous spirit and hard work.

Max is an inspiration for all of us during this holiday season and beyond, and I am proud to call him our Granite Stater of the Month.

Thank you.

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

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

DACA

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, this fall, I met with Dreamers in my home State of Oregon. At meetings in Eugene and in Portland, these young people gave powerful accounts of how the Trump administration has needlessly and cruelly injected fear into their lives and the lives of their families.

Right now, these Dreamers—these young people who have done nothing wrong, who have terrific grades, wonderful conduct, who are helping their

families—are faced with the very real threat that they may be ripped away from the only lives and the only country they have ever known. These young people might be little more than numbers on a page to those who spend their days waging political fights in the Nation's Capital, but this is not just some academic topic for the thousands of young people across the land who would be affected by these vicious policies. This is a real-life issue with real-life consequences and real-life dangers for many of our friends and neighbors.

It is real for those like Cynthia Aguilar, whom I met this fall at the University of Oregon in Eugene. She spoke eloquently about how her mother sacrificed so much for her, living paycheck to paycheck so Cynthia could have an education and a better life.

It is real for those like Eastern Oregon University student Daysi Bedolla, who spoke just as movingly when we met in Portland, as well as in La Grande at a townhall I held in her community. Not only does Daysi talk about the huge contributions that Dreamers are making in their hometowns and college campuses, she demonstrates her contributions each day at Eastern Oregon University as the school's student body president.

Cynthia, Daysi, and so many others are what I call the real dream team, and I am proud to be their teammate in this fundamental fight for fairness. It is not a small fight. In Oregon alone, there are an estimated 11,000 Dreamers—enough to fill almost every seat in the Memorial Coliseum—and every one of those young people has parents and brothers and sisters and friends in their communities. They have well-laid plans to work hard in school, make something of their lives, and start families of their own in the United States. The strength of their stories fuels our fight, and that is why I join colleagues today in insisting that the Dream Act come to the floor of this Senate. This has been a long battle.

I am proud to have been with the Dreamers every step of the way from the Dream Act legislation to President Obama's actions on DACA. I am also pleased to have worked with my colleagues to introduce legislation like the Protect Dreamer Confidentiality Act. This bill would ensure that the information Dreamers provided to the government isn't somehow used against them for immigration enforcement.

Congress has to come together and work in a bipartisan way on a fair path forward for Dreamers. This effort from the White House to punish innocent young people and split families goes against the values we cherish as Americans and further divides our country. These children have known nothing but the United States as their home. They have done nothing wrong and everything right. They deserve an opportunity to stay here. Our government made a promise to Dreamers when we encouraged them to share their stories

publicly, submit to background checks, and pay taxes. It would be wrong to go back on that promise now.

I am pleased to be on this floor to say that we are just going to battle every step along the way until there is justice done for the Dreamers.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank Senator MORAN, who graciously gave me some time, and I want to briefly talk about one other subject.

I am the ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, and I am pleased to serve with my colleague from Louisiana who also serves on the committee and will be a conferee on the tax bill.

I would like to bring up a matter the President introduced yesterday. The President has long said that there was going to be a "fantastic tax bill"—his words, not mine—and obviously the American people don't see it that way. Overwhelmingly, we see in surveys—I saw it in townhall meetings over the weekend, in a community Hillary Clinton won, in a community where Donald Trump was extremely popular—that this tax bill was incredibly unpopular.

The President admitted yesterday that there was a "tiny little sliver" of Americans who, as he said, "just through circumstances maybe don't get the full benefit of the tax bill." I am not sure what tax plan he is talking about, but it sure can't be the one that hikes taxes on middle-class folks that Republicans are working out in the conference room now.

So I want to get to the numbers, just briefly, from the independent, non-partisan referees at the Joint Committee on Taxation. These are the folks we pay. The numbers they have given us really aren't in line with what the President is talking about when he says only a "tiny little sliver" of Americans are going to be hurt and come out behind.

Thirteen million low- and middle-income Americans are facing an immediate tax hike of \$100 or more because of this bill. Apparently, in the President's view, 13 million Americans is a "tiny little sliver."

That is just the immediate impact. The bill gets worse and worse for middle-class folks with each passing year, and 2027 is when the numbers put your jaw on the floor. Under this plan that the President says is so "fantastic," 150 million middle-class taxpayers either get a couple of crumbs or they get hit with an outright tax hike. I am going to say that once more. One hundred and fifty million Americans will get nothing but crumbs or an outright tax hike. That is what the President calls a "tiny little sliver"? It is pretty close to 90 percent of the middle class.

That is just the raw math of who is facing a tax hike. As I have said, this bill drives a dagger into the heart of the Affordable Care Act. Thirteen million Americans are going to lose their

healthcare, and tens of millions more will get hit with a hidden tax hike in the form of higher insurance premiums. Then, of course, we all understand that the coverage requirement in the Affordable Care Act that Senate Republicans seek to remove is what makes it possible for us to get loophole-free, airtight protection for those who faced discrimination when they had a preexisting condition.

This is pretty troubling stuff, and it sure doesn't strike me that when this administration says that only a "tiny little sliver" of people are going to get hurt—the reality shows something very different.

The fact is, after all the giveaways to the multinational corporations and the well-connected and high-fliers, this bill is going to cost more than \$1 trillion. It is a real head-scratcher, how you can spend so much money, help so few people, and convince yourself that what you are doing is so terrific.

Peddling the idea that there is just a "tiny little sliver" of people out there who don't benefit from this tax plan, in my view, is preposterous, and the tens of millions of Americans this bill is going to hurt deserve far better.

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. MORAN. 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. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE AND ACCESS ACT

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I am glad to see the Presiding Officer in the Chair because I came to talk about a topic that he and I share a great concern and compassion about—the veterans of our States and our Nation.

I first want to thank Senator JOHN MCCAIN, of Arizona. Many of my colleagues have spent a much longer time in the Senate than I have, and they have had the opportunity to work side by side with Senator MCCAIN more often than I have, but I am honored today to join him in legislation that we introduced earlier this week. It is S. 2184, the Veterans Community Care and Access Act of 2017.

I am honored to have the opportunity to work side by side with Senator MCCAIN and other colleagues as we try to determine how best we can care for those who served our Nation. I wish to use this opportunity to pay tribute to the Senator from Arizona for his service to our Nation and what I know of his experience in Vietnam and his service to the Nation but what I also know

of him in difficult circumstances in which he continues to work for the benefit and well-being of the people of our country. We both share—he is a veteran, not I—the ideals and beliefs that those who served our country deserve only the best from a grateful nation.

I have been a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee since I came to Congress with that goal in mind, and I continue to serve in the Senate as a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I serve now as the chairman of the appropriations subcommittee that funds the Department of Veterans Affairs. We have introduced the Veterans Community Care and Access Act because we want to call on the VA to do what it is they say they want to do. This bill fulfills priorities.

The reason this bill comes to the Senate floor at this point in time is that the Veterans Choice Program was created at a time of crisis at the VA in which veterans were not being served and not being well served, and Congress responded with a program to allow veterans to access care in their communities. It is before us again because that program expires presumably this month, perhaps early in January. The bill expires when the funding for the Veterans Choice Program is used up, and that is a matter of days or weeks away. The effort, in part, is to reauthorize the Veterans Choice Program but, more importantly, to make certain that we revitalize, update, improve, alter, and transform the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In my view, it would be a sad circumstance in which we reach the conclusion that we must simply reauthorize the Choice Program without using this opportunity to transform the VA into something better that can serve the needs of more veterans in a better way to fulfill the needs of those veterans.

The legislation that Senator McCAIN and I have introduced does several things with regard to transforming the VA. It merges and modernizes the community care programs into one program. It provides greater access to care for veterans within the VA and within the community. In my view, this is not just about improving access or the quality of care in the community. It is about improving the opportunity of the VA to care for veterans within the VA. It establishes a framework for the VA to build a high-performing healthcare network. That network is designed to care for veterans where they can best receive the care, where they can receive the best quality care, and where they can geographically attain the care they need.

In addition to that, it requires the VA to coordinate that care within that network across the system so that once a veteran is a patient of the VA, they are not forgotten, they are followed, and they, as an individual veteran, have a care coordinator within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Regarding reform legislation on this VA community care, Secretary Shulkin, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, told me: "We need more specificity." So we developed legislation that balances instruction and guidance from Congress with the VA's own proposal. Secretary Shulkin also told me that if too much is left to the regulation process, "the VA will keep things the way they are now"—that things will not change. This is a recognition of the bureaucracy that he manages, and it is a recognition of that bureaucracy's refusal to change.

Refusal to change, unfortunately, is what got us to the 2014 scandal—exhibited, particularly, in Phoenix—which revealed nationwide system failures and resulted in the deaths of veterans. It is also evidenced by refusal to change, which is shown the number of times we have had a crisis in which the VA has run out of money to pay for the Choice Program and again comes to us at the 11th hour telling us they need help financially to keep the Choice Program going. It is a reason why today we can't tell you how much money is needed or when the current resources will expire.

I don't want us to miss the opportunity to do something more than simply reauthorize the Choice Program. I want to use this opportunity to create a system that not only works for veterans but modernizes and transforms the VA into a 21st century healthcare system that will serve our veterans today and veterans for generations to come.

This legislation reforms the VA healthcare system by connecting independent demand and capacity assessments to objective access and quality standards, which are used, then, to provide the veterans access to care in their community. The point here is that the VA remains the gatekeeper. The point, also, is that the criteria—the broad outline by which community care should be and must be provided—is determined by Congress, not by rules and regulations from within the bureaucracy of the Department. This legislation creates the tools the VA must use to reform healthcare, safeguards our veterans from inconsistent experiences, and leads to poor health outcomes.

This effort was a collaboration, including a strong collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs, but also with the General Accounting Office, the Congressional Research Service, the Department of Defense, RAND, various healthcare industry experts across the country, as well as veterans services organizations.

We worked closely with the entities that have investigated the VA. In the Appropriations subcommittee that I chair, we often have the IG or the GAO in front of us explaining one more time a flaw that occurred at the VA and what needs to be done to correct that flaw. We sought their input into how

not to fix the consequences of a flaw but how to avoid a flaw. We want to fill in the gaps and develop solutions in advance of problems, and that requires real transformation within the VA.

We need to get the VA's house in order so they can do what they want to do, what they are required to do, and what the Americans demand of them—care for our veterans. There is too much dysfunction still happening at the VA for Congress not to take a stronger and more measured approach to reforming the VA healthcare system. It is unacceptable, in my view, for us to rely on "criteria the Secretary will develop" because that translates into a VA bureaucracy determining veteran eligibility in that regulatory process.

In large part, this legislation is derived, in my view from my experience as a Member of the Senate, in which not a day goes by that our office doesn't hear from veterans across Kansas and across the country. They bring to us the problems they have experienced, what all of us in the Senate would call casework. Somebody brings us a problem, and we work to solve it. The goal and my belief is that the outcome of this legislation reduces the amount of casework, which isn't about reducing our workload. It is about making certain that veterans don't have to come to their Congressman or Congresswoman and don't have to come to their U.S. Senator to get the services they are entitled to by law and by moral obligation. We don't learn from history. We need transformation. We need something more than just saying: Let's keep the current process in place for a while longer.

Following World War II, GEN Omar Bradley was assigned the task of overhauling the VA for the millions of Americans who were returning home from World War II. He said some important things at that point in time. Bradley rightfully kept the needs of veterans at the forefront. He said: "We are dealing with veterans, not procedures; with their problems, not ours."

The goal and the outcome of good legislation will be to reduce and, hopefully, over time, to eliminate most of the problems our veterans experience in dealing with the VA and in accessing the healthcare they have been promised.

The VA has done an admirable job in many, many instances, but way too many veterans fall through the cracks. I would estimate that our office receives 30 new cases every week, and most of them deal with the issue of healthcare, and many of those deal with the issue of community care.

We can reform this system. We can make it better for the veteran. We can make it better for the provider and for those hospitals and clinics across Kansas and around the country that are willing to serve the VA if there is a process in place by which they get paid and they get paid at a rate with which they can afford to care for those veterans. What I would say is that, in

most instances, it is so they don't lose more money in caring for those veterans.

Just like at the conclusion of World War II, when General Bradley overhauled the VA, today's VA is in need of another major reform. Just as General Bradley did, we must keep the veterans' unique wants and needs in mind as we reshape and reform the delivery of healthcare. Veterans require and deserve the best our Nation has to offer. If the VA is serious about restoring the trust with veterans, then, the VA needs to be committed to creating a modern, functional healthcare system that increases access—both within the VA and within the community—for timely and quality care. We ought not miss this opportunity. We ought not shy away from legislation that helps to achieve that outcome.

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

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

DACA

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to spend a couple of minutes talking about the Dream Act and the so-called DACA issue. There are so many acronyms here in Washington. Sometimes we rely too much on them, but in this case, a lot of Americans know what we are talking about—the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

This policy was put in place in the prior administration. Then in September, in this administration, the President made an announcement to end the program, to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program. The President imposed, I would argue, an arbitrary deadline of March 5 of next year, which is looming now. Something on the order of 20,000 DACA recipients have already lost their protection from detention and deportation, and I believe that it is critical for Congress to act now to pass the bipartisan Dream Act.

What are we talking about here?

We are talking about young people who arrived in this country, in many cases, at very, very young ages—some of them babies, some of them young children at the time. When you hear their stories, you come away impressed that they have succeeded, that they have become part of the fabric of American life.

In a meeting a couple of months ago—sitting in a conference room, around a long conference table with other DACA recipients, because of the looming deadline and the potential that she could lose the status she has now and be deported—one DACA recipient said to me: The only country I have ever known doesn't want me—or at

least she was reflecting that the policy the administration had enunciated seemed to send a message to her that she was not wanted.

This makes no sense at all on a number of fronts, and I will get to each of them in a moment, but I will start with the word "promise." These young people were made a promise by our government. It was made by the President of the United States of America when he said: Come forward, and we will protect you because you have taken that affirmative step forward.

That promise cannot be violated, in my judgment, by any President or, certainly, by inaction on the part of Congress. If this government is willing to break that promise to what most believe is something on the order of 800,000 young people who have lived in the United States since their childhoods and after our having allowed them to better contribute to their families and their communities, why would any government around the world, let alone our own people, believe any other promise that we would make?

Would we have that moment, I would hope that we would be confident that a foreign government that happens to be an ally would be able to take our word for something—take the word of the President, take the word of a Federal official or a Member of Congress—when we make an assertion.

We all remember the story in the context of the Cuban missile crisis, when an American official went to see President de Gaulle of France—an ally, a close ally, an ally for generations. In discussion with President de Gaulle of France, that envoy said: The President of the United States wants me to present evidence to you to prove that there are missiles in Cuba.

As we were told, President de Gaulle said: There is no reason for you to show the surveillance pictures. If the President of the United States says there are missiles in Cuba, I believe him, and you don't need to prove it to me.

Part of that was because, over the generations, leaders of our country had built up a kind of credibility, a believability, that was very important to our international relationships—in this case, having to do with the French people.

Yet our government would break a promise to 800,000 young people—law-abiding young people, young people who have succeeded, in many of whom our country has invested by way of their educations. They have been educated in our school districts—educated in grade school and in high school and in our institutions of higher education in some instances. We are going to break a promise to them? Why would anyone trust us around the world if we would break a promise to 800,000 young people?

This is the responsibility not only of the administration but of both parties in both Houses because, if that promise is violated by inaction or action, then I think that we damage our credibility

here at home, especially, but also around the world.

We know that there are economic consequences to this action or inaction. By one estimate, when I consider just Pennsylvania, here are some of the numbers. In Pennsylvania, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program has allowed nearly 5,900 young people to come forward and to pass background checks to live and to work legally in this country. That was the promise. You come forward, and you allow a background check to proceed. You pass it, and you work legally in this country.

What kind of impact would play out in Pennsylvania if those 5,900 young people were to be lost because DACA would have ended?

The cost for our State would be, by one estimate, \$357 million. The national number is extraordinarily high. For the 800,000 young people who have lived in the United States since their childhoods, if DACA ends, the national economy will lose more than \$460 billion—that is billion with a "b" as opposed to the Pennsylvania number, which is in the millions—over the decade. So it would be, roughly, \$46 billion or so every year for 10 years. Why would we do that? Why would anyone want that to happen—to have that kind of economic hit to the national economy?

I think it is wrong just based upon its being a violation of a promise. It is a sacred obligation of any government, especially to the people who are living within the boundaries of the United States of America. That is offensive enough for me to speak out against action or inaction that would be against the interests of these young people. Even if you did not prioritize the violation of a sacred promise, you could also arrive at the conclusion that ending DACA would be a mistake for purely economic reasons if you were concerned about the national economy.

These young people, known as Dreamers, as I said, have lived in this country since they were very young. They are law-abiding residents. They have learned English. They pay taxes and have gone to school. They have secured jobs to support themselves and their families. For many of these Dreamers, America is, indeed, the only home they have ever known. Here are a couple of examples, in this case, from Pennsylvania.

Audrey Lopez, a Dreamer from Lancaster, PA, was brought to the United States from Peru when she was just 11 years old. Audrey spent most of her childhood in Pennsylvania, and her parents instilled in her the value of hard work and an education. Like so many Dreamers, Audrey Lopez only learned that she was undocumented when she started applying to college and learned that she did not have a Social Security number.

Despite her not having access to financial aid, Audrey worked hard and graduated from Millersville University

of Pennsylvania in 2012. After graduation, she took a job in public service at Church World Services in assisting refugees with resettlement. This past fall, Audrey accepted a nearly full scholarship to American University, here in Washington, where she will obtain a master's in international development. She has chosen that course of study, in part, due to fear of deportation. She is hoping to arm herself with the tools to make her country a better place.

We should be supporting young, hard-working people like Audrey who want to work in the service of others and our Nation. Instead, there are people here in Washington who are threatening their futures—not only her future but our Nation's future—by making us less safe and damaging the economy.

I say "less safe" if that is the way we treat law-abiding individuals in our country, people who have lived here their whole lives. They may not have been born here—they may not have a number—but for all intents and purposes, they are Americans. They live in American communities and attend American schools. They have achieved things that we would hope every American would achieve, and they have worked hard. In some cases, they didn't realize they were any different from any other child until much later in life when they were told they might not have had a number or a special status that others around them might have had. In any case, in addition to being the wrong thing to do—violate a promise—and in addition to hurting our economy, if you end DACA, it will not be good for our security.

Again, why would anyone believe that we could enter into a hard and fast security agreement or protect our own people if we would not be willing to protect people in our own country who have followed the law? This would be an insult and an outrage if it were hundreds of people, but we are talking about 800,000 who will be subject to losing their status and, ultimately, be deported because the U.S. Congress doesn't have the guts and doesn't have the integrity to protect them.

So this is a test, a test of the U.S. Congress—both Houses—and it is a test for the administration as well. I hope they can pass this test, the test of whether we keep our promise or whether we lie to the people. That is what this is about. This is about basic integrity, and there is no in-between here. You either keep your promise or you don't. We will see what the administration does, we will see what the Congress does, and we will see whether people care about the economy.

There is a lot of talk about growing the economy. How can we say we want to grow the economy, when you reject because of some ideology or some special interest—reject and compromise and damage the future of 800,000 people who live here? That is inexcusable and unforgivable. I hope we see some moral courage over the next couple of weeks when it comes to these young

people. Ending DACA is bad for our economy, it tears away the integrity of our government, and it is bad for our security. If this program is ended, we are less safe as a country, without a doubt.

This is why Congress must move immediately to pass the bipartisan Dream Act. It is a bill I was proud to vote for and move forward in 2007 and 2010. The bill would allow Dreamers to become permanent residents if they meet the very stringent qualifications outlined in the bill. This means giving those 5,900 Pennsylvanians who have been granted DACA status some security and a future they can count on. This is why we can say America is a great country, when we keep our promises, when we protect our own folks in our communities, especially these individuals who work very hard.

So this is a basic test. I hope our government will meet it. I hope the administration will work with us to make sure we can finally pass into law a measure that will remove this uncertainty and remove the fear people live with.

Let me conclude with one observation. I was in a meeting a couple of weeks ago with a young woman who said: The only country I have ever known doesn't seem to want me.

Another young woman in the same meeting said her whole goal in life was pretty simple. She wanted to be a nurse. She said she wanted to heal people. She had done well in school, had followed all the rules, and now she may be in trouble, subject to deportation down the road, if somehow this DACA policy isn't upheld, if our promise is violated, our sacred promise to 800,000 people. This young woman was telling a room full of people about this goal she had, this aspiration to be a nurse, and when she said, "All I want to do is heal people," she became very upset.

Another young woman who had achieved in school and had done well was a volunteer firefighter in Pennsylvania. She worries about it as well. Story after story, example after example of young people who have worked very hard their whole lives, have achieved in school, their friends are all around them, and their families are a part of these communities. Is our government going to violate a promise to them? Why would anyone believe our government after that on any promise if it violates a promise that fundamental? Why would anyone trust the U.S. Congress if these young people aren't protected?

I hope Congress will meet this test, support the Dream Act, and get it done. If we get that done, then we can say we are a government people should trust. If you don't get this done, it is a lot more difficult to make the case that our word is good here at home and that it is good internationally.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MAKING FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to H.J. Res. 123, which was received from the House, and that there be 30 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form, in relation to H.J. Res. 123; further, that following the use or yielding back of that time, the joint resolution be considered read a third time and the Senate vote on the joint resolution with no intervening action or debate.

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

The clerk will report the resolution.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 123) making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2018, and for other purposes.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the joint resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

RECOGNIZING THE UAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM AND THE GREAT ALASKA SHOOTOUT

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, every week I have been coming down to the floor to talk a little bit about my great State, about the wonders of its natural landscape—a land that everybody should see for themselves—and we talk about special people. I know the Presiding Officer looks at this as one of the favorite times in his long week. We talk about the people who have made a difference in Alaska, our Alaskan of the Week. It is one of the best things I get to do here as Alaska's Senator because I get to talk about Alaska's beauty; the people who make my State so special; the kind, generous people full of rugged determination, full of patriotism, full of drive, full of life.

Living in the North in some of the most difficult terrain and extreme conditions of the world breeds competition in the best ways possible. It also sparks creativity all across the State. When creativity meets competition, great things can happen.

You saw great things happen on the basketball court late last month when University of Alaska Anchorage's women's basketball team, who are our Alaskans of the Week, won the championship at the Great Alaska Shootout in Anchorage, the seminal sports event of the year that for four decades has corresponded with Thanksgiving weekend.

Let me talk for a few minutes about the Great Alaska Shootout. In the late 1970s, a coach from the University of Alaska Anchorage's basketball team had a vision to put the fledgling UAA basketball program on the map. How

would he do that? He would create a preseason college basketball tournament, and he would make sure that participation in any tournament outside the contiguous lower 48 States didn't count against the limits for how many games a team was allowed to play. And so was born the Great Alaska Shootout.

For the past 40 years, tens of thousands of Alaskans from all over the State—and I would say Americans from all over the country—many who had never been to a professional game or even a college game, traveled to Anchorage to watch some of the best basketball in the country. In Anchorage, people opened their homes to the teams from the lower 48 to enjoy a home-cooked Thanksgiving dinner.

The teams and the players who came to Alaska over the last 40 years are legion—Patrick Ewing, Glenn Robinson, Sam Perkins, Ray Allen, Dwayne Wade, and Alaska's own Trajan Langdon, just to name a few. All the great college basketball coaches at one time or another came to our State—Coach K, Jim Valvano, Bobby Knight, Denny Crum, Roy Williams, Tom Izzo, Pat Summitt, and so many others. As one reporter put it, "It was an annual Thanksgiving week staple for ESPN and it made Anchorage the center of the college basketball world for one bright, shining week."

Time and again, the UAA Seawolves—both the men and women's teams—Division 2 programs, who were up against some of the biggest Division 1 powerhouses in the country, showed the world what basketball in Alaska looked like, and it looked strong.

The Great Alaska Shootout was a gift to the world, to America, and to all of Alaska. Times have changed, and so have college basketball tournaments. More choices are available. Other States have begun to compete with Alaska. So this past Thanksgiving, sadly, was the Shootout's last tournament. But, again, UAA's basketball teams made us proud. All told, the men's teams won 39 games in 40 Shootouts. This past Thanksgiving Day, the UAA women, which has become a Division 2 powerhouse under the leadership of Coach Ryan McCarthy, claimed the women's championship in the final Shootout, beating the Division 1 University of Tulsa Golden Hurricanes 59 to 52 in a thriller. It was their seventh title in tournament history.

Everyone involved—the businesses that sponsored the Shootout over the years, the many avid fans who haven't missed a game, and all those who played in the Great Alaska Shootout over four decades—is deserving of recognition. But at this year's final Great Alaska Shootout, the UAA women's team showed us all the true meaning of grit and determination.

So here is to the Seawolves, our Alaskans of the Week. Here is to the history of the Great Alaska Shootout. It is a great day to be a Seawolf. Thanks

for all the great games, the great memories, and a truly great Alaskan and American basketball tournament.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President pro tempore emeritus, the Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, first, I applaud the Senator from Alaska. He makes us all want to be there.

Mr. President, let me speak for a moment in my role as vice chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee about the continuing resolution that the distinguished majority leader has just mentioned.

The current spending caps set in place by law will not responsibly fund the government or alleviate the consequences of sequestration on both our domestic priorities and our military readiness.

Since March 1, along with many others, I have constantly repeated that we must reach a bipartisan budget deal that is based on parity, free of poison pill riders, not waste taxpayer dollars on a useless border wall, which we will never be reimbursed for by Mexico. But with the current continuing resolution expiring tomorrow, we are running out of time to reach an agreement.

The continuing resolution before us today will allow us more time to reach a bipartisan agreement and keep the government's lights on during negotiations. I will join with the distinguished majority leader in voting for this, but the key to successful negotiation during that time is parity. Sequestration has had devastating consequences on our country that are going to impact a generation, but we have to raise the caps on both sides of the ledger—defense and nondefense.

Anywhere you go, the vast majority of Americans will agree that it is not an academic exercise. The decisions we make here today have real impacts on people's lives.

There is no question that sequestration has hurt our military readiness, but it has also hurt our Nation's economy, and it has led to a decline in critical government services on which millions of Americans depend.

Our veterans have been shortchanged. An average of 558,000 veterans fail to get a healthcare appointment during the 30-day standard. The average wait time for the VA to process a benefit appeal is over 3 years.

Our infrastructure is crumbling. America, this great Nation, now gets a D-plus rating from the American Society of Civil Engineers. This means that the roads, the bridges, the dams, the drinking water, the public parks, and the schools we all use and depend on have a near-failing grade.

Education programs have suffered. The purchasing power of the maximum Pell Grant now covers only 29 percent of the average price for college.

Our elderly citizens are getting shortchanged. More than 1 million Social Security benefits appeals are backlogged an average of 605 days. An esti-

mated 10,000 people die each year before their appeals are completed.

I could go on and on.

If we raise the caps for defense programs but do not also raise the caps to properly fund our nondefense priorities, we will still shortchange our men and women in uniform. If we don't invest in our Nation's economy and educate our youth, the military will not have the expertise, qualified soldiers, or advanced research that it needs to be the best in the world. If we don't invest in diplomacy, our world will become less safe and we will be less safe. As our Secretary of Defense said: If you are not going to invest in diplomacy, you better buy me more bullets. And we would fail to provide the level of care for our veterans that they deserve.

I have talked with both Republicans and Democrats. I am confident we can reach an agreement that addresses our country's needs and responsibly funds our government.

As we in the Congress work on it, it is discouraging that the President has cast doubt on these negotiations. He has even invited a "good [government] shutdown." His party is in charge, so I don't know why he would say that. Even more discouraging is a recent Washington Post story that said the President has told his confidants that a government shutdown would be good for him politically.

Well, there are 325 million Americans who are going to be affected by a government shutdown. It is irresponsible. It is no way to govern. In all my years in the Senate, with Republican and Democratic Presidents alike, never have I heard such damaging rhetoric come from either a Republican or Democratic President of the United States.

The last Republican shutdown in 2013 dealt a devastating blow to the Nation's economic growth. It amounted to an estimated \$1.5 billion lost for each day of the 16 days of the shutdown. Federal workers were furloughed through no fault of their own for a combined total of 6.6 million days, stalling important research and grinding our government to a halt.

I know the Republicans are in charge of the House, the Senate, and the White House. If there is a Republican shutdown this fiscal year, it is because they want one. I have talked to a lot of Republicans and Democrats, whom I respect and work with every day, who hope the 2-week continuing resolution before us is an indication we will not go down that path. I hope these Republicans will work with Democrats to produce a responsible, bipartisan budget deal that meets the needs of our Nation.

We have squandered enough time. I stand ready, as I have been since March, when we negotiated a budget agreement that kept us from having a shutdown last time. I will work with the Republican leadership, as I did then, to secure the funding agreements we need to complete our appropriations

work for this fiscal year. This 2-week continuing resolution will give us that chance.

I urge my Democratic colleagues to join with the Republican leader and vote aye.

Mr. President, how much time is remaining before the vote?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 8 minutes.

Mr. LEAHY. And how much time is there on the other side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Nine minutes.

Mr. LEAHY. So we will not vote unless time is yielded back.

I believe there are no other speakers.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time be yielded back on both the Republican and Democratic sides.

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

All time is yielded back.

The joint resolution was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 81, nays 14, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 311 Leg.]

YEAS—81

Alexander	Donnelly	Leahy
Baldwin	Duckworth	Manchin
Barrasso	Durbin	McCaskill
Bennet	Enzi	McConnell
Blumenthal	Feinstein	Menendez
Blunt	Fischer	Moran
Boozman	Gardner	Murkowski
Brown	Graham	Murphy
Burr	Grassley	Murray
Cantwell	Hassan	Nelson
Capito	Hatch	Perdue
Cardin	Heinrich	Peters
Carper	Heitkamp	Portman
Casey	Heller	Reed
Cassidy	Hoeven	Risch
Cochran	Inhofe	Roberts
Collins	Isakson	Rubio
Coons	Johnson	Schatz
Corker	Kaine	Schumer
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott
Cortez Masto	King	Shaheen
Cotton	Klobuchar	Shelby
Daines	Lankford	Stabenow

Strange	Tillis	Whitehouse
Sullivan	Udall	Wicker
Tester	Van Hollen	Wyden
Thune	Warner	Young

NAYS—14

Booker	Hirono	Rounds
Cruz	Lee	Sanders
Ernst	Markey	Sasse
Gillibrand	McCain	Warren
Harris	Merkley	

NOT VOTING—5

Crapo	Franken	Toomey
Flake	Paul	

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 123) was passed.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES—
H.R. 1

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the authority granted on a motion yesterday, the Chair appoints conferees on the part of the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses.

The Presiding Officer appointed Mr. HATCH, Mr. ENZI, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. THUNE, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. SANDERS, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. MENENDEZ, and Mr. CARPER conferees on the part of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to make a motion to proceed to Executive Calendar Nos. 533, 534, and 535 today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 533.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Leonard Steven Grasz, of Nebraska, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

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

braska, to be the United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, Richard Burr, John Cornyn, Michael B. Enzi, Johnny Isakson, Chuck Grassley, Mike Crapo, Ron Johnson, Roger F. Wicker, Marco Rubio, Mike Rounds, Steve Daines, Lindsey Graham, Shelley Moore Capito, Cory Gardner, James E. Risch, Jeff Flake.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 534.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Don R. Willett, of Texas, to be a Circuit Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Don R. Willett, of Texas, to be a Circuit Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, Richard Burr, John Cornyn, Michael B. Enzi, Johnny Isakson, Chuck Grassley, Mike Crapo, Ron Johnson, Roger F. Wicker, Marco Rubio, Mike Rounds, Steve Daines, Lindsey Graham, Shelley Moore Capito, Cory Gardner, James E. Risch, Jeff Flake.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 535.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of James C. Ho, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of James C. Ho, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, Richard Burr, John Cornyn, Michael B. Enzi, Johnny Isakson, Chuck Grassley, Mike Crapo, Ron Johnson, Roger F. Wicker, Marco Rubio, Mike Rounds, Steve Daines, Lindsey Graham, Shelley Moore Capito, Cory Gardner, James E. Risch, Jeff Flake.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for 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 DONALD HARLAN HANSEN

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate, recognize, and acknowledge the longtime public service that Donald Harlan Hansen has provided to the State of Utah.

This month, Donald Hansen will officially retire as the civil litigation chief for the Salt Lake County district attorney. He has worked for the district attorney since 2001, where he served as lead counsel in jury and bench trials before State and Federal courts and countless administrative proceedings.

Prior to his work with the Salt Lake County district attorney, he worked for the Utah Attorney General, in which capacity he served as litigation counsel for critical legal cases throughout the State. Utah-born and bred, Donald graduated from the University of Utah before obtaining his law degree from the S.J. Quinney College of Law.

Donald has been published in many legal proceedings and is admitted to practice law before the Utah Supreme Court, the U.S. District Court for the District of Utah, the Oregon Supreme Court, the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon, the U.S. Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Donald currently lives in the Mill Creek area of Salt Lake and is the father of four children and the grandfather of 12. He is a dedicated public servant, and I wish him the very best in his retirement.

76TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to recognize and honor the 2,403 Americans who lost their lives when Japanese naval forces launched a surprise attack on our Nation at Pearl Harbor, HI, 76 years ago. Today we remember the millions of Allied Forces who fearlessly and selflessly gave their lives to defeat fascism and defend our freedoms and way of life. We will never forget the sacrifices that were made during World War II, and the memory of the attack on Pearl Harbor inspires us to remain forever vigilant.

Just a few days ago, the Associated Press, AP, reported that the Department of Defense's POW/MIA Accounting Agency has identified 100 sailors and marines killed when the USS Oklahoma capsized during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Officials exhumed the bodies from a cemetery in Hawaii "after determining that advances in forensic science and genealogical help from families made it possible to identify the men." These marines and sailors have been classified as missing since World War II.

According to the AP, agency officials think they will be able to identify about 80 percent of the battleship's missing crewmembers by 2020. I imagine this is of great comfort to the families of those who were lost, many of whom may now be buried in their hometowns. This effort is yet another example of our obligations to those who have given "the last full measure of devotion" that this Nation and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth, as Abraham Lincoln so eloquently and poignantly put it at Gettysburg, PA.

We must be ready to counter threats to our Nation, both at home and abroad, that endanger the American people and our values. In President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's historic "Day of Infamy" speech, he pledged to "... make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us." Our Nation must remain strong and vigilant, prepared to meet future challenges, particularly in the fight against those who wish us harm.

America's Greatest Generation was forged from the sacrifices required in the crucible of World War II. On this

day, as we pause to remember and honor those sacrifices, we remind ourselves and the world that "American values" still stands for freedom and a determination to use our unmatched strength to defend those who are unable to defend themselves. On this anniversary, we also take time to honor the brave men and women who currently serve in our military and their families. We pray for their safe return as they continue to serve in harm's way.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO JUNE RYCHALSKI

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week, I have the distinct honor of recognizing June Rychalski for her service with the Montana Department of Military Affairs. She has served Montana with grace, diligence, a positive attitude, and genuine care for the people of the Treasure State.

During her 35 years of service, June has been secretary to the senior Army adviser, administrative assistant to the adjutant general and next month will complete her career with the Montana Veterans Affairs Division. June demonstrated compassion and professionalism on a daily basis. Her ability to help a grieving family member navigate the challenges of veteran burial honors or steer a distressed veteran in the right direction to attain benefits is highly commendable. Her presence in the in the Montana Department of Military Affairs will be missed, but the mentorship she provided agency personnel over the years will ensure that her legacy endures. To her coworkers, June was regarded as their greatest advocate.

When June retires, she plans to do what she has always done, continue to take good care of others. At age 83, June's example is inspiring. Her work ethic, compassion, and commitment to excellence represent the best of Montana values. Thank you, June, for your service. I wish you the best in retirement and appreciate all you have done for our State.●

TRIBUTE TO DAVE COURVOISIER

• Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate Mr. Dave Courvoisier on his retirement from KLAS news station in Las Vegas. I am honored to recognize his dedication to reporting to the citizens of southern Nevada for 32 years, as well as his commitment to the communities he has served throughout his career.

A native midwesterner, Dave received both his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Illinois. He began his career at KCCC Radio in Carlsbad, NM, and then carried his talents to Grand Junction, CO, where he jumpstarted his television career at KJCT. Dave worked for various news outlets in Indiana, Missouri, and North

Carolina before settling in Las Vegas with his wife in 1985.

Mr. Courvoisier quickly established himself as a tactful and passionate reporter for KVBC in Las Vegas. His numerous reports related to the issues of disadvantaged children yielded both national and local awards. In particular, Mr. Courvoisier is well-known for his involvement with Wednesday's Child, an adoption program, and he distinguished himself with his news feature series focused on helping foster children find permanent homes. His commitment to this issue is also reflected in his personal life; he established a new chapter of Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

While Dave has led an incredibly successful reporting career, he believes his most important work to be raising his three daughters with his wife. As Nevada's senior Senator, I want to thank Mr. Courvoisier for his dedication to keeping the people of southern Nevada informed. I offer him the very best in his retirement and my well wishes for many successful and fulfilling years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO WALTER STRONG

● Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I am pleased to recognize Mr. Walter Strong on the occasion of his retirement. Walt has led the University of Oklahoma's Max Westheimer Airport, OUN, for 19 years and has a lifelong dedication to the aviation community. Under his leadership, the Max Westheimer Airport has demonstrated it is one of the best flight schools in the Nation, organizes successful pilot fly-ins, and maintains a youth outreach program to encourage the next generation to get involved in flying.

Mr. Strong began his career in aviation in the U.S. Air Force, working as an air traffic controller in both control tower and radar approach control facilities. Retiring after 20 years of service in the Air Force, Mr. Strong began working at the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission, rising to the level of deputy director. He was one of Oklahoma's first airport inspectors. From 2004 to 2005, he served as the president of the Oklahoma Airport Operators Association. A pillar of the Oklahoma aviation community, Mr. Strong was awarded the "Airport Manager of the Year" in 2011, the same year that Max Westheimer Airport was recognized as "Airport of the Year." In 2016, under his leadership, the Max Westheimer Airport received the Willie F. Card Contract Tower Service Award from the Federal Aviation Administration, which recognizes one tower each year for embodying Willie Card's vision of a tower that places profound emphasis on both safety and efficiency.

At the Federal level, Mr. Strong has been a passionate advocate for aviation, serving on the board of the American Association of Airport Executives and as the chair of the U.S. Contract Tower Association and ensuring that

all Members of Congress are aware of the importance of general aviation to their constituents and to their communities.

I know that I join his family, the Max Westheimer Airport, and the University of Oklahoma community in thanking him for his years of service and contributions to the aviation community. Congratulations on your retirement.●

TRIBUTE TO DORA SPAULDING

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate and honor an exceptional Vermonter, Dora Spaulding, who this year is celebrating 50 years of dedicated service to the students at the Marion Cross Elementary School in Norwich, VT.

Ms. Spaulding has been the administrative assistant at the Marion Cross School for the past 10 years and was secretary to the principal for 40 years prior to that. Her story is all the more impressive when one considers that Dora Spaulding attended Marion Cross School herself, from first to eighth grade. It is hard to imagine today, but Dora was the only girl in her entire first-grade class.

As the school's administrative assistant, Ms. Spaulding is responsible for the payroll, purchasing, bus transport arrangements, facility rental schedule, and other administrative tasks for the school, but more than that, she is, in many ways, the face of the school. In fact, several members of my staff grew up in Norwich and attended the Marion Cross School and speak highly of her many contributions to the students, school, and the community.

Dora Spaulding embodies the spirit of dedicated public service. I applaud her for helping to steward countless young people over the past 50 years and for her tremendous commitment to education and community.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:02 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 1266. An act to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts with nonprofit organizations to investigate medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The message further announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 38. An act to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide a means by which nonresidents of a State whose residents may carry concealed firearms may also do so in the State.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 90. Concurrent resolution condemning ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya

and calling for an end to the violence in and an immediate restoration of humanitarian access to the state of Rakhine in Burma.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 12:44 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

S. 1266. An act to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts with nonprofit organizations to investigate medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The enrolled bill was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

At 5:15 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following joint resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.J. Res. 123. Joint resolution making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2018, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 38. An act to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide a means by which nonresidents of a State whose residents may carry concealed firearms may also do so in the State; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

The following concurrent resolution was read, and referred as indicated:

H. Con. Res. 90. Concurrent resolution condemning ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya and calling for an end to the violence in and an immediate restoration of humanitarian access to the state of Rakhine in Burma; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 2199. A bill to authorize appropriations for border infrastructure construction, to provide conditional resident status to certain aliens, and to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to include grounds of inadmissibility and deportability for alien members of criminal gangs and cartels, and for other purposes.

The following bill was read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 1164. An act to condition assistance to the West Bank and Gaza on steps by the Palestinian Authority to end violence and terrorism against Israeli citizens.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-3643. A communication from the Acting Director of Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled

“Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program” (RIN0572-AC37) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-3644. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Bacillus subtilis strain BU1814; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance” (FRL No. 9969-96) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-3645. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Sedaxane; Pesticide Tolerances” (FRL No. 9970-04) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-3646. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Indoxacarb; Pesticide Tolerances” (FRL No. 9970-39) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-3647. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics), transmitting, pursuant to law, the quarterly exception Selected Acquisition Reports (SARs) as of September 30, 2017 (OSS-2017-1286); to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3648. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the fiscal year 2017 report on Department of Defense purchases from foreign entities; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3649. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Report to Congress on Corrosion Policy and Oversight Budget Materials for Fiscal Year 2017”; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3650. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Procedures for Determining Eligibility for Access to Classified Matter or Special Nuclear Material” (RIN1992-AA56) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3651. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Financial Responsibility Requirements under CERCLA Section 108(b) for Classes of Facilities in the Hardrock Mining Industry” (FRL No. 9971-50-OLEM) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3652. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Findings of Failure to Submit State Implementation Plan Submittals for the 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)” (FRL No. 9971-66-OAR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3653. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division,

Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Texas; Revisions to Emissions Banking and Trading Programs for Area and Mobile Sources” (FRL No. 9971-04-Region 6) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3654. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; New York; Reasonably Available Control Technology for the 2008 8-Hour Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards” (FRL No. 9971-83-Region 2) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3655. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Delaware; Reasonably Available Control Technology (RACT) State Implementation Plan (SIP) Under the 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS)” (FRL No. 9971-58-Region 3) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3656. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; Ohio; Redesignation of the Fulton County Area to Attainment of the 2008 Lead Standard; Withdrawal of Direct Final Rule” (FRL No. 9971-74-Region 5) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3657. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; Minnesota; 2008 Ozone Transport” (FRL No. 9971-61-Region 5) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3658. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; Illinois; Redesignation of the Chicago and Granite City Areas to Attainment of the 2008 Lead Standard; Withdrawal of Direct Final Rule” (FRL No. 9971-77-Region 5) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3659. A communication from the Chief of the Trade and Commercial Regulations Branch, Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Emergency Import Restrictions Imposed on Archaeological and Ethnological Materials from Libya” (RIN1515-AE34) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 1, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3660. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Notice: Tier 2 Tax Rates for 2018” (FR Doc. 2017-25741) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3661. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Request for Comments on Application of Excise Taxes With Respect to Donor Advised Funds in Certain Situations” (Notice 2017-73) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3662. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Section 5000A Guidance for Individuals with No Available Marketplace Bronze-Level Plan” (Notice 2017-74) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3663. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “2017 Base Period T-Bill Rate” (Rev. Rul. 2017-23) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3664. A communication from the Chairman, Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Physician Supervision Requirements in Critical Access Hospitals and Small Rural Hospitals; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3665. A communication from the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period from April 1, 2017 through September 30, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3666. A communication from the Acting Chairman, Federal Maritime Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission’s Performance and Accountability Report for fiscal year 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3667. A communication from the Chief Operating Officer, Millennium Challenge Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for the Office of Inspector General’s Semiannual Report for the period of April 1, 2017 through September 30, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3668. A communication from the Secretary of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department’s Semiannual Report of the Office of the Inspector General for the period from April 1, 2017 through September 30, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3669. A communication from the Solicitor General, Department of Justice, a report relative to a case pending before the Supreme Court (Raymond J. Lucia et al v. Securities and Exchange Commission); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-3670. A communication from the Deputy General Counsel, Office of Investment and Innovation, Small Business Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Small Business Investment Companies—Administrative Fees” (RIN3245-AG65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 6, 2017; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

EC-3671. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; to the Committees on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; and Foreign Relations.

PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

The following petition or memorial was laid before the Senate and was referred or ordered to lie on the table as indicated:

POM-143. A resolution adopted by the Senate of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts memorializing its position on immigration; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

RESOLUTIONS

IN RESPONSE TO THE JANUARY 27, 2017
PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE ORDER

Whereas, Immigrants founded this Commonwealth nearly 4 centuries ago, and

Whereas, This nation and this Commonwealth are proud of our strong tradition of welcoming immigrants and refugees to our shores, and

Whereas, Our nation and this Commonwealth have stood as a beacon of hope for refugees fleeing war, violence and persecution, and

Whereas, Immigrants play an essential part in strengthening the communities and enriching the society of this nation and this Commonwealth; and

Whereas, Important sectors of the Commonwealth's economy, including higher education, health care and innovation, depend heavily on immigrants' contributions, and

Whereas, The executive order prohibits many foreign students, workers and other visa holders from 7 targeted majority-muslim nations, including many who have already been vetted and documented, from entering the United States for at least 90 days, suspends the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for 120 days and resumes the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program after 120 days only for nationals of countries as determined jointly by the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Director of National Intelligence; and

Whereas, The First Amendment of the Constitution protects the freedom of religion and this Executive order prioritizes the admission of refugees based on specific religions, and

Whereas, Much of the Executive order is inconsistent with the Nation's and the Commonwealth's strong tradition of welcoming immigrants and refugees to our shores, while not conclusively contributing to the important goal of keeping our residents safe and secure from terrorism, and

Whereas, The Executive order presents serious constitutional and other legal issues of due process, equal protection and discrimination on the basis of religion and national origin, Now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Massachusetts Senate:

(1) Reaffirms the Commonwealth's strong tradition of welcoming immigrants and refugees and rejecting discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion;

(2) Calls on President Trump to reconsider and rescind those portions of the Executive order that interfere with the rights of already documented students, workers, permanent residents and other visitors;

(3) Supports the legal actions of our attorney general and other plaintiffs to contest the legality of the Executive order in court, and be it further

Resolved, That copies of these resolutions shall be transmitted forthwith by the clerk of the Senate to the President of the United States and those Members of Congress from the Commonwealth.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. CORKER, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, without amendment and with a preamble:

S. Res. 150. A resolution recognizing threats to freedom of the press and expression around the world and reaffirming freedom of the press as a priority in efforts of the United States Government to promote democracy and good governance.

By Mr. CORKER, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute and an amendment to the title:

S. 1901. A bill to require global economic and political pressure to support diplomatic denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, including through the imposition of sanctions with respect to the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and any enablers of the activities of that Government, and to reauthorize the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF
COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. HATCH for the Committee on Finance.

*Kevin K. McAleenan, of Hawaii, to be Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security.

By Mr. GRASSLEY for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Leonard Steven Grasz, of Nebraska, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit.

Don R. Willett, of Texas, to be a Circuit Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

James C. Ho, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

Terry A. Doughty, of Louisiana, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Louisiana.

Terry Fitzgerald Moorer, of Alabama, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Alabama.

Mark Saalfield Norris, Sr., of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee.

Claria Horn Boom, of Kentucky, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern and Western Districts of Kentucky.

John W. Broomes, of Kansas, to be United States District Judge for the District of Kansas.

Rebecca Grady Jennings, of Kentucky, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Kentucky.

Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND
JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 2204. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to preserve access to re-

habilitation innovation centers under the Medicare program; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. HEINRICH (for himself and Mr. HELLER):

S. 2205. A bill to improve access by Indian tribes to support from the Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support program (E-rate) of the Federal Communications Commission, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. DAINES:

S. 2206. A bill to release certain wilderness study areas in the State of Montana; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mrs. MCCASKILL, and Ms. HEITKAMP):

S. 2207. A bill to allow qualified volunteer first responders to qualify for public service loan forgiveness; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MARKEY (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mrs. CAPITO, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 2208. A bill to provide for the issuance of an Alzheimer's Disease Research Semipostal Stamp; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Mr. CASSIDY, and Mr. TOOMEY):

S. 2209. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to require States to count monetary winnings from lotteries and other lump-sum income of \$80,000 or more as if they were obtained over multiple months for purposes of determining income eligibility for medical assistance; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself and Mr. UDALL):

S. 2210. A bill to ensure the Chief Information Office of the Federal Communications Commission has a significant role in decisions related to information technology, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. MANCHIN (for himself, Mr. CASEY, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. TILLIS, and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 2211. A bill to establish a national endangered missing advisory communications network, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. CASEY, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BENNET, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. KAINE, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. BOOKER, and Ms. HARRIS):

S. 2212. A bill to establish the "Biomedical Innovation Fund", and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 2213. A bill to authorize Pacific Historic Parks to establish a commemorative display to honor members of the United States Armed Forces who served in the Pacific Theater of World War II, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. PAUL:

S.J. Res. 50. A joint resolution relating to the disapproval of the proposed foreign military sale to the Government of Georgia of Javelin Missiles and Javelin Command Launch Units; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND
SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. INHOFE, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. BROWN, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. CASEY, Mr. WYDEN, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. Res. 350. A resolution recognizing the 69th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the celebration of "Human Rights Day"; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. COCHRAN):

S. Res. 351. A resolution recognizing the bicentennial of the State of Mississippi on December 10, 2017; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. Res. 352. A resolution designating the week of December 3 through December 9, 2017, as "National Nurse-Managed Health Clinic Week"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. KING):

S. Res. 353. A resolution designating December 16, 2017, as "Wreaths Across America Day"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mr. MENENDEZ):

S. Res. 354. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the courageous work and life of Argentinian prosecutor Alberto Nisman, and calling for a swift and transparent investigation into his tragic death in Buenos Aires on January 18, 2015; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. LANKFORD:

S. Res. 355. A resolution improving procedures for the consideration of nominations in the Senate; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 298

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 298, a bill to require Senate candidates to file designations, statements, and reports in electronic form.

S. 540

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 540, a bill to limit the authority of States to tax certain income of employees for employment duties performed in other States.

S. 1172

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1172, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to foreign persons responsible for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals, and for other purposes.

S. 1353

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1353, a bill to require States to automatically register eligible voters to vote in elections for Federal offices, and for other purposes.

S. 1464

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from California

(Ms. HARRIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1464, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the exclusion for energy conservation subsidies provided by public utilities to include subsidies provided by public utilities and State and local governments for water conservation and storm water management.

S. 1842

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1842, a bill to provide for wildfire suppression operations, and for other purposes.

S. 1913

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1913, a bill to amend the Federal Crop Insurance Act and the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 to make the native sod provisions applicable to the United States and to modify those provisions, and for other purposes.

S. 2030

At the request of Mr. TILLIS, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2030, a bill to deem the compliance date for amended energy conservation standards for ceiling light kits to be January 21, 2020, and for other purposes.

S. 2032

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2032, a bill to make certain footwear eligible for duty-free treatment under the Generalized System of Preferences, and for other purposes.

S. 2055

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2055, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to better address substance use and substance use disorders among young people.

S. 2070

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2070, a bill to amend the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, to reauthorize the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program, and to promote initiatives that will reduce the risk of injury and death relating to the wandering characteristics of some children with autism.

S. 2143

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2143, a bill to amend the National Labor Relations Act to strengthen protections for employees wishing to advocate for improved wages, hours, or other terms or conditions of employment, to expand coverage under such

Act, to provide a process for achieving initial collective bargaining agreements, and to provide for stronger remedies for interference with these rights, and for other purposes.

S. 2152

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) were added as cosponsors of S. 2152, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide for assistance for victims of child pornography, and for other purposes.

S. 2201

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2201, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to improve college access and college completion for all students.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DAINES:

S. 2206. A bill to release certain wilderness study areas in the State of Montana; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, as a fifth generation Montanan and an avid outdoorsman, I know how important access to our public lands are. Having hiked, camped, biked, and snowmobiled countless miles in the wilderness, forests, and other public lands of Montana, I share with other Montanans the desire to explore the beauty of our state. That is why today I am introducing the Protect Public Use of Public Lands Act. This bill follows calls from countless Montanans and the U.S. Forest Service recommendations to open up Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) that the Forest Service recommended to manage as non-wilderness after the congressionally mandated study in the 1970s. The bill would allow new uses to be considered in the public planning process. For too long these lands have remained in limbo and many forms of recreation have been significantly reduced. For this reason, the Montana Legislature passed a measure calling on Congress to take action on these Wilderness Study Areas, and I have continued to hear from County Commissioners, local Montanans, farmers, ranchers, and recreation groups since I have been in Congress of their support for action. Hearing this call I today introduce the Protect Public Use of Public Lands Act and ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this important measure.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2206

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Protect Public Use of Public Lands Act”.

SEC. 2. RELEASE OF CERTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS IN THE STATE OF MONTANA.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) under the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-150; 91 Stat. 1243), 9 wilderness study areas comprising a total of 973,000 acres of land in the State of Montana were set aside for the Secretary of Agriculture to evaluate the suitability of the wilderness study areas for designation as wilderness in accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), with the evaluation to be completed not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-150; 91 Stat. 1243);

(2) between 1979 and 1986, the Chief of the Forest Service completed the studies of the 9 wilderness study areas and determined that 608,700 acres of the original 973,000 acres designated as wilderness study areas by the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-150; 91 Stat. 1243) were unsuitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System;

(3) since the completion of the studies required under the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-150; 91 Stat. 1243), of the land designated as wilderness study areas by that Act—

(A) 171,000 acres have been designated as wilderness by Congress; and

(B) 663,000 acres remain as wilderness study areas until Congress acts;

(4) Congress has failed to act on the recommendations of the Chief of the Forest Service with respect to the remaining 7 wilderness study areas;

(5) the Montana State legislature passed House Joint Resolution 9, a resolution asking Congress to address the remaining 7 wilderness study areas;

(6) County commissions, sportsmen, farmers and ranchers, and outdoor recreation groups in the State of Montana support Congress acting to remove the land in the State described in subsection (c) to protect public use of public land; and

(7) for the purposes of section 3(a) of the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-150; 91 Stat. 1244), the land in the State of Montana described in subsection (c) has been adequately studied for wilderness designation.

(b) RELEASE.—The land described in subsection (c) is no longer subject to section 3(a) of the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-150; 91 Stat. 1244).

(c) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—The land referred to in paragraphs (6) and (7) of subsection (a) and subsection (b) is—

(1) the approximately 151,000 acres of land comprising the West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area;

(2) the approximately 32,500 acres of land within the Blue Joint Wilderness Study Area not recommended for wilderness classification in the record of decision prepared by the Forest Service entitled “Bitterroot National Forest Plan” and dated September 1987;

(3) the approximately 94,000 acres of land comprising the Sapphire Wilderness Study Area;

(4) the approximately 81,000 acres of land comprising the Middle Fork Judith Wilderness Study Area; and

(5) the approximately 91,000 acres of land comprising the Big Snowies Wilderness Study Area.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Mr. CASSIDY, and Mr. TOOMEY):

S. 2209. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to require States to count monetary winnings from lotteries and other lump-sum income of \$80,000 or more as if they were obtained over multiple months for purposes of determining income eligibility for medical assistance; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2209

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Prioritizing the Most Vulnerable Over Lottery Winners Act of 2017”.

SEC. 2. TREATMENT OF LOTTERY WINNINGS AND OTHER LUMP-SUM INCOME FOR PURPOSES OF INCOME ELIGIBILITY UNDER MEDICAID.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1902 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396a) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(17), by striking “(e)(14), (e)(14)” and inserting “(e)(14), (e)(15)”; and

(2) in subsection (e)—

(A) in paragraph (14) (relating to modified adjusted gross income), by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

“(J) TREATMENT OF CERTAIN LOTTERY WINNINGS AND INCOME RECEIVED AS A LUMP SUM.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—In the case of an individual who is the recipient of qualified lottery winnings (pursuant to lotteries occurring on or after January 1, 2018) or qualified lump sum income (received on or after such date) and whose eligibility for medical assistance is determined based on the application of modified adjusted gross income under subparagraph (A), a State shall, in determining such eligibility, include such winnings or income (as applicable) as income received—

“(I) in the month in which such winnings or income (as applicable) is received if the amount of such winnings or income is less than \$80,000;

“(II) over a period of 2 months if the amount of such winnings or income (as applicable) is greater than or equal to \$80,000 but less than \$90,000;

“(III) over a period of 3 months if the amount of such winnings or income (as applicable) is greater than or equal to \$90,000 but less than \$100,000; and

“(IV) over a period of 3 months plus 1 additional month for each increment of \$10,000 of such winnings or income (as applicable) received, not to exceed a period of 120 months (for winnings or income of \$1,260,000 or more), if the amount of such winnings or income is greater than or equal to \$100,000.

“(ii) COUNTING IN EQUAL INSTALLMENTS.—For purposes of subclauses (II), (III), and (IV) of clause (i), winnings or income to which such subclause applies shall be counted in equal monthly installments over the period of months specified under such subclause.

“(iii) HARDSHIP EXEMPTION.—An individual whose income, by application of clause (i), exceeds the applicable eligibility threshold established by the State, shall continue to be eligible for medical assistance to the extent that the State determines, under procedures established by the State (in accordance with

standards specified by the Secretary), that the denial of eligibility of the individual would cause an undue medical or financial hardship as determined on the basis of criteria established by the Secretary.

“(iv) NOTIFICATIONS AND ASSISTANCE REQUIRED IN CASE OF LOSS OF ELIGIBILITY.—A State shall, with respect to an individual who loses eligibility for medical assistance under the State plan (or a waiver of such plan) by reason of clause (i)—

“(I) before the date on which the individual loses such eligibility, inform the individual—

“(aa) of the individual’s opportunity to enroll in a qualified health plan offered through an Exchange established under title I of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act during the special enrollment period specified in section 9801(f)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to loss of Medicaid or CHIP coverage); and

“(bb) of the date on which the individual would no longer be considered ineligible by reason of clause (i) to receive medical assistance under the State plan or under any waiver of such plan and be eligible to reapply to receive such medical assistance; and

“(II) provide technical assistance to the individual seeking to enroll in such a qualified health plan.

“(v) QUALIFIED LOTTERY WINNINGS DEFINED.—In this subparagraph, the term ‘qualified lottery winnings’ means winnings from a sweepstakes, lottery, or pool described in paragraph (3) of section 4402 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or a lottery operated by a multistate or multijurisdictional lottery association, including amounts awarded as a lump sum payment.

“(vi) QUALIFIED LUMP SUM INCOME DEFINED.—In this subparagraph, the term ‘qualified lump sum income’ means income that is received as a lump sum from one of the following sources:

“(I) Monetary winnings from gambling (as defined by the Secretary and including gambling activities described in section 1955(b)(4) of title 18, United States Code).

“(II) Damages received, whether by suit or agreement and whether as lump sums or as periodic payments (other than monthly payments), on account of causes of action other than causes of action arising from personal physical injuries or physical sickness.

“(III) Income received as liquid assets from the estate (as defined in section 1917(b)(4) of a deceased individual.”; and

(B) by striking “(14) EXCLUSION” and inserting “(15) EXCLUSION”.

(b) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.—

(1) INTERCEPTION OF LOTTERY WINNINGS ALLOWED.—Nothing in the amendment made by subsection (a)(2) shall be construed as preventing a State from intercepting the State lottery winnings awarded to an individual in the State to recover amounts paid by the State under the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) for medical assistance furnished to the individual.

(2) APPLICABILITY LIMITED TO ELIGIBILITY OF RECIPIENT OF LOTTERY WINNINGS OR LUMP SUM INCOME.—Nothing in the amendment made by subsection (a)(2)(A) shall be construed, with respect to a determination of household income for purposes of a determination of eligibility for medical assistance under the State plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) (or a waiver of such plan) made by applying modified adjusted gross income under subparagraph (A) of section 1902(e)(14) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396a(e)(14)), as limiting the eligibility for such medical assistance of any individual that is a member of the household other than the individual who received qualified lottery winnings or qualified lump-sum income (as defined in subparagraph (J) of such

section 1902(e)(14), as added by subsection (a)(2)(A) of this section).

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 350—RECOGNIZING THE 69TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CELEBRATION OF “HUMAN RIGHTS DAY”

Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. INHOFE, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. BROWN, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. CASEY, Mr. WYDEN, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 350

Whereas the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations 69 years ago on December 10, 1948, represents the first comprehensive agreement among nations as to the specific rights and freedoms of all human beings;

Whereas the Universal Declaration of Human Rights upholds the basic principles of liberty and freedom enshrined in the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights;

Whereas awareness of human rights—

(1) is essential to the realization of fundamental freedoms;

(2) promotes equality;

(3) contributes to preventing conflict and human rights violations; and

(4) enhances participation in democratic processes;

Whereas Congress has a proud history of promoting human rights that are internationally recognized; and

Whereas December 10 of each year is celebrated around the world as “Human Rights Day”: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the 69th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the celebration of “Human Rights Day”;

(2) supports the ideals of human rights and reaffirms the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

(3) encourages all nations to continue working towards freedom, peace, and security, which can be achieved through democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law; and

(4) encourages the people of the United States to observe “Human Rights Day” and continue a commitment to upholding freedom, democracy, and human rights across the globe.

SENATE RESOLUTION 351—RECOGNIZING THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI ON DECEMBER 10, 2017

Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mr. COCHRAN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 351

Whereas December 10, 2017, marks a historic bicentennial, denoting 200 years since the State of Mississippi was admitted to the Union;

Whereas this momentous occasion marks a time for Mississippians and all people of the

United States to remember the past and celebrate the future, including the significant contributions of the State of Mississippi to the culture, governance, and intellect of the United States;

Whereas on March 1, 1817, President James Monroe signed into law “An Act to enable the people of the western part of the Mississippi territory to form a constitution and state government, and for the admission of such state into the union, on an equal footing with the original states” (3 Stat. 348, chapter 23), setting the boundaries for the State of Mississippi;

Whereas on December 10, 1817, the United States approved the Mississippi Constitution and admitted the State of Mississippi as the 20th State of the Union;

Whereas the history of Mississippi is most deeply rooted in the people and land of Mississippi, which has produced a unique and rich culture distinct from any other State;

Whereas in the 200 years since the birth of Mississippi as a sovereign State, the citizens of Mississippi have made many significant achievements in agriculture, art, cuisine, industry, literature, music, science, and many other important areas;

Whereas Mississippians have shown their patriotism to the United States through their dedicated service to the protection of the United States through every major conflict;

Whereas the land of Mississippi has produced crops, timber, and protein for the United States and the world while surviving the devastation of hurricanes and other natural disasters over the course of the history of Mississippi; and

Whereas the Mississippi Bicentennial Celebration Commission is dedicated to celebrating all aspects of the past 200 years of history of Mississippi as a State and has planned numerous major events in coordination with communities, which will culminate on December 9, 2017, with the grand opening of—

(1) the Museum of Mississippi History; and
(2) the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum:

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the momentous occasion of the bicentennial of the State of Mississippi on December 10, 2017;

(2) encourages all Mississippians to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and activities; and

(3) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate transmit an enrolled copy of this resolution to—

(A) the Governor of Mississippi;

(B) the National Archives; and

(C) the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

SENATE RESOLUTION 352—DESIGNATING THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 3 THROUGH DECEMBER 9, 2017, AS “NATIONAL NURSE-MANAGED HEALTH CLINIC WEEK”

Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself and Mr. MERKLEY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 352

Whereas nurse-managed health clinics are nonprofit, community-based health care sites that offer primary care and wellness services based on the nursing model;

Whereas the nursing model emphasizes the protection, promotion, and optimization of health, the prevention of illness, the alleviation of suffering, and the diagnosis and treatment of illness;

Whereas an advanced practice nurse leads each nurse-managed health clinic, and an

interdisciplinary team of highly qualified health care professionals staffs each nurse-managed health clinic;

Whereas nurse-managed health clinics offer a broad scope of services, including treatment for acute and chronic illnesses, routine physical exams, immunizations for adults and children, disease screenings, health education, prenatal care, dental care, and drug and alcohol treatment;

Whereas, as of September 2017, approximately 500 nurse-managed health clinics provided care across the United States and recorded more than 2,500,000 patient encounters annually;

Whereas nurse-managed health clinics strengthen the health care safety net by expanding access to primary care and chronic disease management services for vulnerable and medically underserved populations in diverse rural, urban, and suburban communities;

Whereas research has shown that nurse-managed health clinics experience high patient retention and patient satisfaction rates, and nurse-managed health clinic patients, compared to patients of other similar safety net providers, experience higher rates of generic medication fills and lower hospitalization rates;

Whereas the 2013 Health Affairs article “Nurse-Managed Health Centers and Patient-Homes Could Mitigate Expected Primary Care Physician Shortage” highlights the ability of nurse-managed health clinics to bring high quality care to individuals who may not otherwise receive needed services; and

Whereas nurse-managed health clinics offering both primary care and wellness services provide quality care in a cost-effective manner: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week of December 3 through December 9, 2017, as “National Nurse-Managed Health Clinic Week”;

(2) supports the ideals and goals of National Nurse-Managed Health Clinic Week; and

(3) encourages the expansion of nurse-managed health clinics so that nurse-managed health clinics may continue to serve as health care workforce development sites for the next generation of primary care providers.

SENATE RESOLUTION 353—DESIGNATING DECEMBER 16, 2017, AS “WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA DAY”

Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. KING) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 353

Whereas, 26 years before the date of adoption of this resolution, the Wreaths Across America project began with an annual tradition, which occurs in December, of donating, transporting, and placing 5,000 Maine balsam fir remembrance wreaths on the graves of the fallen heroes buried at Arlington National Cemetery;

Whereas, during the 26 years preceding the date of adoption of this resolution, more than 4,517,000 wreaths have been sent to locations, including national cemeteries and veterans memorials, in every State and overseas;

Whereas the mission of the Wreaths Across America project, to “Remember, Honor, Teach”, is carried out in part by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies in all 50 States and overseas, including at—

(1) Arlington National Cemetery;

- (2) veterans cemeteries; and
- (3) other locations;

Whereas the Wreaths Across America project carries out a week-long veterans parade from Maine to Virginia, stopping along the way to spread a message about the importance of—

(1) remembering the fallen heroes of the United States;

(2) honoring those who serve; and

(3) reminding the people of the United States about the sacrifices made by veterans and the families of veterans to preserve freedoms in the United States;

Whereas, in 2016, approximately 1,200,000 remembrance wreaths were sent to more than 1,220 locations across the United States and overseas, which is an increase of more than 100 locations compared to the previous year;

Whereas, in December 2017, the tradition of escorting tractor-trailers filled with donated wreaths from Harrington, Maine, to Arlington National Cemetery will be continued by—

(1) the Patriot Guard Riders; and

(2) other patriotic escort units, including—

(A) motorcycle units;

(B) law enforcement units; and

(C) first responder units;

Whereas hundreds of thousands of individuals volunteer each December to help lay remembrance wreaths;

Whereas, in 2017, the trucking industry in the United States continues to support the Wreaths Across America project by providing drivers, equipment, and related services to assist in the transportation of wreaths to more than 1,300 locations across the United States;

Whereas the Senate designated December 17, 2016, as “Wreaths Across America Day”; and

Whereas, on December 16, 2017, the Wreaths Across America project will continue the proud legacy of bringing remembrance wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates December 16, 2017, as “Wreaths Across America Day”;

(2) honors—

(A) the Wreaths Across America project;

(B) patriotic escort units, including—

(i) motorcycle units;

(ii) law enforcement units; and

(iii) first responder units;

(C) the trucking industry in the United States; and

(D) the volunteers and donors involved in this worthy tradition; and

(3) recognizes—

(A) the service of veterans and members of the Armed Forces; and

(B) the sacrifices that veterans and members of the Armed Forces have made, and continue to make, for the United States, a great nation.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am pleased to be joined by my colleague Senator ANGUS KING in sponsoring this resolution to designate December 16, 2017, as Wreaths Across America Day. Since its inception, the Wreaths Across America project has become an annual tradition of donating, transporting, and placing Maine balsam fir remembrance wreaths on the graves of our fallen heroes buried at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as at veterans cemeteries and memorials in every State and overseas. In the program’s 26 years, more than 4.5 million wreaths have been placed in honor of those who have served our country.

The origin of Wreaths Across America is an inspiring example of that generosity and gratitude. During the Christmas season in 1992, Morrill and Karen Worcester took time during their busiest season to donate and deliver wreaths from their company in Harrington, ME, to Arlington National Cemetery to honor the heroes who lie at rest there. At first, a small group of volunteers laid the wreaths with little notice. In recent years, however, the Arlington Wreath Project has grown to become a national phenomenon. The people of Maine are proud that this important and well-deserved tradition began in our State.

This year, on December 16, thousands of volunteers in Arlington, throughout our Nation, and overseas will carry out the mission of Wreaths Across America to “Remember, Honor, Teach.” This will conclude a weeklong procession between Maine and Virginia, with stops along the way to pause and remember the men and women who have died to preserve our freedoms, spread the message about the importance of honoring those who serve, and remind the people of the United States about the sacrifices made by our veterans and their families. This procession helps to ensure that those sacrifices are never forgotten.

The Patriot Guard Riders, along with other dedicated escort groups, will accompany tractor-trailers filled with donated wreaths from Maine to Arlington National Cemetery. America’s trucking industry has long supported Wreaths Across America by providing drivers, equipment, fuel, and related services to assist in the transportation of wreaths across the country to more than 1,200 locations.

Wreaths Across America not only honors our departed heroes but also imparts the important message to veterans who are still with us that we honor their service. It tells our men and women in uniform today that we are grateful for their courage and devotion to duty. It tells the families of those serving our country that they are in our thoughts and prayers. And it tells the families of the fallen that we share their grief.

Throughout human history, the ever-green wreath has been offered as a tribute to heroes. On December 16, 2017, we will again offer this enduring symbol of valor and sacrifice as part of our never-ending obligation to thank those who wore the uniform of our country. In this season of giving, we will pay tribute to those who have given us the most precious gift of all—our freedom.

SENATE RESOLUTION 354—EX-PRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE COURAGEOUS WORK AND LIFE OF ARGENTINIAN PROSECUTOR ALBERTO NISMAN, AND CALLING FOR A SWIFT AND TRANSPARENT INVESTIGATION INTO HIS TRAGIC DEATH IN BUENOS AIRES ON JANUARY 18, 2015

Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mr. MENENDEZ) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 354

Whereas the bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on July 18, 1994, killed 85 people and wounded more than 300;

Whereas the investigation of the AMIA bombing had been marked by grave judicial misconduct, and the case had reached an impasse in 2004;

Whereas, in September 2004, Alberto Nisman was appointed as the Special Prosecutor in charge of the 1994 AMIA bombing investigation;

Whereas, on October 25, 2006, Argentine prosecutors Alberto Nisman and Marcelo Martínez Burgos formally accused the Government of Iran of directing the bombing, and the Hezbollah militia of carrying it out;

Whereas Ibrahim Hussain Berro, a member of the terrorist group Hezbollah, was identified as the AMIA bomber;

Whereas Iranian nationals Ali Fallahijan (former Iranian intelligence minister), Mohsen Rabbani (former Iranian cultural attaché), Ahmad Reza Asghari (former Iranian diplomat), Ahmad Vahidi (former Iranian defense minister), Ali Akbar Velayati (former Iranian foreign minister), Mohsen Rezaee (former chief commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), and Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (former President of Iran) were named as suspects in the bombing;

Whereas Lebanese national Imad Fayeze Moughnieh (former head of Hezbollah’s external security) was named as a suspect in the bombing;

Whereas, in November 2007, Interpol voted to put these 5 Iranian and 1 Lebanese suspects in the 1994 AMIA attack on its most wanted list, and reportedly has extended these red notices in July, 2017;

Whereas, in 2007, Guyanese national Abdul Kadir plotted to blow up John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York and was, according to Mr. Nisman, “the most important Iranian agent” in Guyana and influenced by Mohsen Rabbani;

Whereas, in May 2013, prosecutor Alberto Nisman published a 500-page indictment accusing Iran of establishing terrorist networks throughout Latin America, including in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Colombia, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Suriname, dating back to the 1980s;

Whereas, according to the Department of State’s 2016 Report on Terrorism, Hezbollah, Iran’s proxy terrorist organization, continues to maintain an active presence in the Western Hemisphere as well as “some financial supporters, facilitators and sympathizers”;

Whereas, in January 2013, the Government of Argentina under then-President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner agreed with Iran in a Memorandum of Understanding to set up a so-called “truth commission” to investigate who was “really” responsible for the bombing, despite the fact that Iran and its proxy

actors were and remain the only suspects in the attack;

Whereas, in May 2014, an Argentine court found this Memorandum of Understanding to be unconstitutional;

Whereas prosecutor Alberto Nisman was invited to testify before the United States Congress in February 2013, but was prevented from doing so by the Government of Argentina, who denied him permission to travel to Washington, DC;

Whereas the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation provided technical assistance and cooperated with Argentina law enforcement officials in the AMIA bombing investigation;

Whereas, on January 13, 2015, prosecutor Alberto Nisman alleged in a complaint that then-Argentinian President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and then-Minister of Foreign Relations Héctor Timerman conspired to cover up Iranian involvement in the 1994 terrorist bombing, and reportedly agreed to negotiate immunity for Iranian suspects and help get their names removed from the Interpol list;

Whereas prosecutor Alberto Nisman claimed that he had evidence of a “sophisticated criminal plan,” reportedly including wire-taps and phone calls “between people close to Mrs. Kirchner” and a number of Iranians, including Mohsen Rabbani, showing a planned exchange of Iranian oil for purchasing rights to Argentine grain to revive Argentina’s economy;

Whereas prosecutor Alberto Nisman was scheduled to present his new findings to the Argentinian Congress on January 19, 2015;

Whereas prosecutor Alberto Nisman was found shot in the head in his apartment in Buenos Aires on January 18, 2015;

Whereas officials of the Government of Argentina under then-Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner continued to discredit Mr. Nisman after his suspicious death, attempting to ruin his reputation;

Whereas then-Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner created unfounded hypotheses with regard to Mr. Nisman’s findings, including conspiracies she suggested were orchestrated by United States hedge funds and other entities she considers “hostile” to the President of Argentina;

Whereas, in May 2015, an Argentine Federal court had dismissed Nisman’s findings against Ms. Kirchner and other officials and later the accusations were dropped by Javier De Luca, another Federal prosecutor;

Whereas that move raised questions in Argentina about the objectivity of Mr. De Luca, given his closeness to a group of Ms. Kirchner’s supporters;

Whereas an independent investigation launched by Alberto Nisman’s family released its own report by forensic experts and forensic pathologists showing that Mr. Nisman’s death was not an accident or suicide, including claims that “the prosecutor had been shot in the back of the head”, that “no gun powder residue was found on his hands”, and that “Mr. Nisman’s body had been moved to the bathroom once he was shot”;

Whereas, in September 2016, Argentine President Mauricio Macri stated that “it’s hard to believe that Nisman committed suicide. There are too many situations, indications, realities of those hours, those days, that don’t match with a suicide.”;

Whereas, in September 2016, Argentine President Mauricio Macri called for “a definitive investigation” into the death of Alberto Nisman, saying: “I want to generate the conditions, which I think I’m doing, to allow our justice system to freely investigate what really happened.”;

Whereas, on September 22, 2017, forensic investigators of the Argentine Federal Police

submitted a report to a Federal court concluding that slain prosecutor Alberto Nisman did not commit suicide, but rather was drugged, beaten, and fatally shot in the head on January 18, 2015;

Whereas, on December 7, 2017, former Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner was charged with treason for attempting to cover up Iran’s role in the 1994 AMIA bombing; and

Whereas no one yet has been brought to justice for the death of Alberto Nisman, nor have any of the named Iranian suspects for the AMIA bombing faced prosecution: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) offers its sincerest condolences to the family of Argentinian prosecutor Alberto Nisman;

(2) recognizes Alberto Nisman’s courageous work in dedicating his life to the investigation of the bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, which killed 85 people and wounded more than 300;

(3) applauds Argentine President Mauricio Macri for calling for a swift, transparent, and independent investigation into Alberto Nisman’s tragic death;

(4) recognizes the arduous and technical work of the Argentine National Gendarmerie in reviewing evidence to produce credible, evidence-based findings;

(5) encourages the public release of the results of the investigation, including the forensic and pathological reports by the government, which would show whether Alberto Nisman took his own life, or if his death is a homicide;

(6) commends the Government of Argentina for exemplifying the rule of law and the importance of an independent justice system;

(7) urges the President of the United States to directly offer United States technical assistance to the Government of Argentina in solving the death of Alberto Nisman, as well as the ongoing investigation of the AMIA bombing;

(8) expresses serious concern about Iran’s terrorist networks in Argentina and all of the Western Hemisphere, mindful of the findings of Mr. Nisman’s investigation and reports on this matter, and encourages continued investigations of Iranian terrorist networks based on his work;

(9) urges an independent investigation into the findings of Mr. Nisman regarding the events that led to the memorandum signed between Argentina and Iran;

(10) likewise expresses serious concerns about attempts by former Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and her government to discredit Mr. Nisman and raise unfounded hypotheses on Mr. Nisman’s AMIA findings and the circumstances of Mr. Nisman’s death while the work of the courts on this matter still continues; and

(11) urges the President of the United States to continue to monitor Iran’s activities in Latin America and the Caribbean as it is mandated by the Countering Iran in the Western Hemisphere Act of 2012 (Public Law 112-220).

SENATE RESOLUTION 355—IMPROVING PROCEDURES FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF NOMINATIONS IN THE SENATE

Mr. LANKFORD submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration:

S. RES. 355

Resolved,

SECTION 1. CONSIDERATION OF NOMINATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—

(1) POST-CLOTURE CONSIDERATION.—If cloture is invoked in accordance with rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate on a nomination described in paragraph (2), there shall be no more than 8 hours of post-cloture consideration equally divided in the usual form.

(2) NOMINATIONS COVERED.—A nomination described in this paragraph is any nomination except for the nomination of an individual—

(A) to a position at level I of the Executive Schedule under section 5312 of title 5, United States Code; or

(B) to serve as a judge or justice appointed to hold office during good behavior.

(b) SPECIAL RULE FOR DISTRICT COURT NOMINEES.—If cloture is invoked in accordance with rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate on a nomination of an individual to serve as a judge of a district court of the United States, there shall be no more than 2 hours of post-cloture consideration equally divided in the usual form.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I have 8 requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today’s session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 7, 2017, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Committee on Finance is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 7, 2017, at 2 p.m. in SD-215 to conduct a hearing on the nomination of Kevin K. McAleenan, of Hawaii, to be Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSION

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pension is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 7, 2017, at 10 a.m. in room SD-430 to conduct a hearing entitled “Implementation of the 21st Century Cures Act: Progress and the Path Forward for Medical Innovation”.

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

The Committee on Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 7, 2017, at 10 a.m. in room SD-226 to conduct a hearing on the following nominations: Leonard Steven Grasz, of Nebraska, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit, James C. Ho, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit, Don R. Willett, of Texas, to be a Circuit Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, Terry A. Doughty, to be

United States District Judge for the Western District of Louisiana, Terry Fitzgerald Moorer, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Alabama, Mark Saalfield Norris, Sr., to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee, Claria Horn Boom, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern and Western Districts of Kentucky, John W. Broomes, to be United States District Judge for the District of Kansas, Rebecca Grady Jennings, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Kentucky, and Robert Earl Wier, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 7, 2017, at 2 p.m. in room SH-219 to conduct a closed hearing.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that privileges of the floor be granted to the following member of my staff, Matt Matis, for the remainder of the day.

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

RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following Senate resolutions, which were submitted earlier today: S. Res. 351, S. Res. 352, and S. Res. 353.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

The resolutions were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 4 p.m. on Monday, December 11; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time

for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Grasz nomination; finally, that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the cloture motions filed during today's session ripen at 5:30 p.m., Monday.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY,
DECEMBER 11, 2017, AT 4 P.M.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:21 p.m., adjourned until Monday, December 11, 2017, at 4 p.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate December 7, 2017:

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

SUSAN PARKER BODINE, OF MARYLAND, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

JOSEPH BALASH, OF ALASKA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.