

in trillions of dollars of investment to improve the quality of life and create a spark in some of the most challenging areas of our country economically.

I thank my House sponsor of the bill, PAT TIBERI, and my Democratic cosponsors, Corey Booker and RON KIND.

We could not have gotten this far without the hard work and dedication of the Finance Committee staff. I thank, in particular, Jay, Mark, Jeff, Jenn, as well as the entire Finance team for their amazing work.

I also want to take a few minutes to thank my staff. I have been blessed with an amazing staff here on Capitol Hill, one of the hardest working staffs I have ever seen. I want to start off by thanking my tax guru, Shay Hawkins, who has done a tremendous job of leading us through this process—fielding thousands of calls and responding to tens of thousands of emails. I would also like to thank my LD, Charles Cogar, for his dedication and his leadership through this time. My chief of staff, Jennifer DeCasper, has done an amazing job of making sure we stayed focused on the objective. The objective was not to simply pass legislation; the objective was, in fact, to change lives where we live, to help the average American experience a little more hope, a little more opportunity by keeping a little more of their money. I also thank my commerce director who has done a fabulous job, Sean Smith, in making sure we communicated effectively the message of hope and opportunity, and my scheduler, Brie Kelly. Thank God for someone who could keep me moving in the right direction. One of the hardest jobs in Washington is being a scheduler for a Member, and being a scheduler for this Member is perhaps the hardest job of scheduling.

My entire team worked diligently, long hours, but that is why we are here. We are here to work long hours, but to produce results—unparalleled results—that will make the American people have just a little more confidence in their elected officials.

Finally, I have to thank the good people of South Carolina. I was first elected to Congress in 2010, and one of my first pieces of legislation was the Tax Reform Act of 2011—February of 2011—to lower the corporate tax rate and to work on restructuring our Tax Code.

Since my first days in Congress, I have been working on this issue. The good people of South Carolina allowed me to serve as a Senator. I was elected in 2014 and reelected in 2016. I will continue to make sure my focus is back at home, where the good South Carolinians who elected me have given me a great privilege.

I will focus on the fact that our work, our dedication should be focused on those folks. The good news is, during this holiday season, we believe this tax reform package will be an early Christmas present.

Let me just say to all the folks, no matter what side of the aisle you are

on, no matter where you live in this country, we are blessed—truly blessed—to live in the greatest country on God's green Earth. Merry Christmas, and may the good Lord bless us with an amazing new year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

#### POWER ACT

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, as we all know, more and more brave women are speaking out about the abuse that has been reported in the papers—abuse by the powerful, in many cases. I want to say at the outset that the country applauds these women for their courage and for setting an example for others.

Some of the stories we have heard about involve sexual harassment, but some of the other stories also appear to involve even more serious crimes, including domestic violence and sexual assault, which is an incredibly important issue that often gets underreported all across the country. As a result of these news stories, I am certainly hopeful these kinds of problems—the domestic violence problems we have in America—are going to start to receive the attention they need and deserve.

Just as we are seeing more men fired from jobs because of sexual harassment and assault, we also need to see more get the punishment they deserve, in a court of law, for violent abuse. We also need to make sure victims are protected and that they have an advocate—a lawyer—who is on their side in these cases.

Unfortunately, many who are suffering from domestic abuse and sexual assault can't afford attorneys to file charges or, importantly, to even protect themselves and their families, their kids. Here is the big irony: When someone is charged with a crime—say a sexual assault crime, say an accused rapist—that person gets a Sixth Amendment right to counsel under the U.S. Constitution. So the perpetrator gets the right to a lawyer. What does the victim get? The victim gets nothing—no attorney, no right to an attorney.

Think about that. An accused rapist gets a lawyer under the Constitution and the victim gets nothing. In fact, what they often get, in terms of crimes, are prosecutors, if it is a criminal case. Prosecutors do a good job, but they are often looking to score a win rather than looking out for the victim and the survivor. If it is a civil case, survivors usually go without attorneys.

I believe this is wrong. Fortunately, we have been working on this in this body. We have a bill to change that. Senator HERTKAMP and I introduced a bill in the Senate that was passed unanimously by this body several months ago—and actually passed it last Congress as well—called the Pro

bono Work to Empower and Represent Act, known as the POWER Act. Congressman JOE KENNEDY in the House has introduced a companion bill where it likewise has enjoyed broad bipartisan support. Some of the most conservative Republicans and some of the most liberal Democrats are showing a broad array of support in the House just as it has enjoyed in the Senate.

When it passes through both Chambers, the bill will be a robust first step in making more lawyers available, working on a pro bono basis for victims and survivors who can't afford representation. There are thousands—tens of thousands—who fall into that category, unfortunately.

So what is the problem we are trying to solve? Domestic violence and sexual assault happens every hour, every day, in every part of our country. According to a recent study by the Centers for Disease Control, roughly 25 percent of American women will be victims of domestic assault in their lifetimes—one in four—25 percent. That is a horrendous statistic. Every day in the United States, on average, three women are killed by a current or former intimate partner, according to the National Network to End Domestic Violence. That is also a shocking, horrendous statistic.

No place is immune. This kind of violence happens in small towns, in big cities, on college campuses, and in suburban homes. This violence transcends political affiliation, race, and socioeconomic status. I know a number of my colleagues have watched as I like to come to the Senate floor and talk about my State—the great State of Alaska—and I like to talk about how many things are so wonderful about Alaska. One thing that isn't wonderful about Alaska is, we have the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual assault in the country. So this is certainly happening in my State, and it is one of the reasons I care so much about this issue. It is happening in every State—every State represented in the U.S. Senate.

There are no simple solutions to combat this issue of nationwide domestic violence, but experts do agree that securing a lawyer for victims is one of the best ways, if not the best way, to get victims and survivors out of their difficult situation—out of what often is a cycle of violence—to get them shelter, housing, and medical care, and protective orders.

Studies have shown that when an abused victim is represented by an attorney, their ability to break out of the cycle of violence increases dramatically. One study found that 83 percent of victims represented by a lawyer were able to obtain a protective order compared to just 32 percent in domestic violence situations when they weren't represented by an attorney.

Not only would more legal representation help victims and survivors of abuse, but it would also help protect children. In these situations, children

are often abused as well. Paige Hodson from Anchorage is a survivor herself. She has been working for years with thousands of women as an advocate for women who are trying to get out of abusive relationships and women who are also trying to protect their children. These are complicated and often difficult issues and cases, but Paige has said it is critical for both the safety of the mom and the kids to make sure they are represented by an attorney.

So what does the POWER Act do? Every area of our country—every part of America—is represented by a judicial district that is represented by a U.S. attorney. Under the authority of the Justice Department, some States have several U.S. attorney districts. Alaska has only one.

Utilizing this national framework of all of our different U.S. attorneys throughout America, the POWER Act sets out a way to increase connections between lawyers and victims, between advocates and survivors. The bill, which has already passed the Senate, directs each U.S. attorney to hold at least one annual event, inviting lawyers and legal service representatives who want to provide their legal services and pro bono time to empower victims by representing them.

It also requires U.S. attorneys to plan and hold events with a focus on addressing these kinds of crimes—domestic violence and sexual assault—in Indian Country and among Alaska Native populations, where some of the abuse in the lower 40 and in my State is very, very high.

Another important point about the POWER Act is that it would not add a dime—not one penny—to the Federal debt. But here is what it would do: It would create an army of lawyers—thousands of lawyers—to defend survivors of abuse. Think about that positive vision. Think about that positive vision and goal. What a great way for Americans, especially attorneys, to rise up in a positive and constructive way in response to all the bad news we are reading almost daily about these issues and show the better angles, the better side of our country.

The model for this bill came from my State of Alaska. As I mentioned, we have the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual assault in the country—something that no Alaskan is proud of. When I was attorney general, working closely with our legislature, our Governor, and many of the victims advocacy groups, we launched a strategy called the Choose Respect Campaign. The Choose Respect Campaign highlighted this problem in our great State.

We did public service announcements about how real Alaskan men choose respect; we changed the laws to make the penalties for perpetrators much harder; and we provided increased services for victims. One way we did that was to hold what were called pro bono legal summits. I hosted those summits. We brought together lawyers and victims

advocacy groups, legal services groups, and this actually worked. It worked. By 2014, over 100 cases in our State were handled by volunteer attorneys providing thousands and thousands of hours of volunteer legal assistance to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Think about that. Alaska has a little over 700,000 people, and we had over 100 attorneys come out—thousands of hours, just in our State, with a small population. If we could take this model to 300 million Americans, we literally would have an army of lawyers helping survivors with volunteer time and helping meet this significant unmet need throughout our country.

As I mentioned, the POWER Act passed unanimously in the Senate, but, unfortunately, it is being held up in the House. Ironically, it is stuck in the Judiciary Committee—the committee focused on bringing justice to Americans. It is stuck there. Remember, this is not going to cost a dime, yet it has been stuck for months in the Judiciary Committee. It is kind of ironic. These victims need help, and this bill will do that.

It is not only my bill to help victims and survivors of sexual assault that is stuck in the Judiciary Committee. My colleague, the majority whip from Texas, Senator CORNYN, has a very important bill that he came to the floor of the Senate just last week to talk about. It is called the SAFER Act and will help States ease the nationwide backlog of thousands of untested rape kits that currently sit untested in labs and on police storage shelves across the country. There are thousands. Ending this backlog could take perpetrators off the streets and provide victims and survivors the justice they deserve. We know this would work. We know that would help.

The SAFER Act passed the Senate under the leadership of Senator CORNYN. Let me talk about how important that bill is to the country. In my State, there are 3,484 untested rape kits, more per capita than any State in the country. Anchorage, my hometown, has one untested kit for every 164 residents. In Juneau, AK, it is one for every 160 residents. The backlogs are all across the country. As Senator CORNYN pointed out in his speech, there are 2,000 kits that remain untested in his State, the State of Texas. In Virginia, where the State legislature has made this kind of testing a priority, there are also more than 2,000 kits sitting on police shelves.

The Detroit Free Press recently reported on how, in 2009, officials stumbled onto more than 11,000 untested rape kits. After they raised enough money to test them, 817 serial rapists were identified. That is why this is so important. Once these kits are processed, they often give us the evidence to go after the abusers, the criminals.

It is remarkable to me that both of these bills—the SAFER Act that Senator CORNYN has championed and the

POWER Act that Senator HEITKAMP and I have championed—are sitting in the House Judiciary Committee. Victims are not getting justice right now with these bills sitting there.

Why on Earth would such bipartisan legislation, which would literally end up helping thousands of survivors and probably bring to justice hundreds of criminals who commit these heinous crimes of sexual assault and domestic violence—why on Earth would we have bills, which have bipartisan support and little to no impact on the Federal Treasury, stuck in the House Judiciary Committee? It is beyond comprehension.

To my colleagues in the House, let's move this. Let's move these bills before the holidays. Let's start focusing on bringing justice to people who really need it.

Helping victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault is not a Republican issue, it is not a Democratic issue, it is not a women's issue, and it is not a men's issue. It is an issue that affects all of us. Working together—as Senators, as Members of the House, as Americans—we should clearly unite in this cause, which transcends politics or ideologies, because we can start changing the culture of abuse. That is what we have been trying to do in Alaska. It is going to take a long time. It is going to take a long time, but we need to act.

I am hopeful that my colleagues in the House—my colleagues particularly in the Judiciary Committee—recognize the urgency of these kinds of situations and will move the SAFER Act and the POWER Act out of committee and get it on the floor for a vote as soon as possible.

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

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

#### RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, Senator MARK WARNER from Virginia, for his powerful and eloquent remarks on the floor less than 24 hours ago. He talked about the threat that exists now—looming larger every day—of a constitutional crisis. It is a crisis that threatens the foundations of our democracy. It involves a potential confrontation and, indeed, a legal conflagration between the President of the United States and the special counsel who has been appointed to investigate wrongdoing in our government.

None of the facts that justified—indeed, required—the appointment of a special counsel has been controverted in any reasonable way by anyone since