



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2017

No. 209

Senate

The Senate met at 10:01 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable LUTHER STRANGE, a Senator from the State of Alabama.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Answer us, Eternal One, as we lift our hearts to You. Have mercy upon our lawmakers and hear their prayers. Remind them that You have set apart the godly for Yourself, surrounding them with the shield of Your favor. May they never forget that You alone can keep a nation safe.

Lord, lead them on the path that will bring them to abundant life, telling them what to do and showing them which way to turn. As Hanukkah ended last evening and Christmas approaches, may Your blessings and peace rest on our Nation and world.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 21, 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, throughout this process of tax reform, Senate Republicans explained time and again that we are fighting for the middle class. Our opponents lobbed one attack after another, claiming we were selling hard-working families short. Of course, that is completely wrong. The tax bill we passed was written to help middle-class families from the very beginning. Our goal was to make their taxes lower, simpler, and fairer.

Under our legislation, the typical family of four making the median family income can expect nearly \$2,000 in tax relief next year. Just yesterday, we saw that tax reform has already inspired job creators to increase take-home pay for thousands of their employees. Yet not a single Democrat joined us to pass this tax relief for American families.

What is worse, just before we voted, Senate Democrats raised a point of order that proved who is really going after low-income families. When given the chance, Senate Democrats, led by the junior Senator from Vermont, raised a procedural challenge to strike out a provision that protects colleges that provide students with tuition-free education. Let me say it again. The junior Senator from Vermont raised a procedural challenge to strike out a provision that protects colleges that

provide students with tuition-free education. They chose to do it after the same provision had already passed the Senate before we went to conference. They didn't have to raise this challenge. It is not required. They chose to. In the process, they knowingly hurt schools that provide tuition-free education to students who can't otherwise afford to go to college.

Let me give you an example. Berea College, in my home State of Kentucky, is dedicated to educating students from the Appalachian region who have limited economic resources—in other words, poor kids from Appalachia. Their students' average household income is less than \$30,000 a year. These are kids from families making less than \$30,000 a year. They are from Appalachia, and their families don't have the means to pay for their education.

Here is what they do at Berea. Every single student receives a scholarship, which covers the cost of their tuition—every student. The students work at the school and in their communities to help cover additional living expenses beyond the costs of attending school. In fact, the vast majority of Berea students are able to graduate debt-free because of the model. For example, they have a great restaurant there. You go there and eat lunch. The kids are cooking, and they are serving. They are working their way through school. When they graduate, they don't have any debt.

Berea College, located in one of the most economically challenged areas of my State, offers a quality education to students with the greatest financial need, and it has done so since 1855—1855. It was founded by abolitionists.

In fact, as my friend in the Chair knows, I am originally from his State. Let me tell you about when I first heard of Berea College. My grandmother and my grandfather had an African-American family who helped them around the house, and they had

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



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an adopted daughter. I was a little kid, and I remember them talking about her going to college.

I said: Where are you going?

She said: I am going to Berea.

I said: Where is that?

She said: It is up in Kentucky.

It was the closest college that would take African-American students at that time. Since they didn't have the means to pay for the tuition, it was a great opportunity to get a tuition-free education.

A few years ago, I called the president of Berea College and said: I would like to try to locate somebody.

He said: Well, the privacy rules are such that all I can do is to see if we can find them and see if they want to meet you.

I said: That is fair enough. This would be a person about a certain age, who would have originally been from Athens, AL. If you can identify this student, I would love to meet her.

He did. When she came to my office in the Capitol with her daughter, who lives in the area, I found out that she graduated from Berea and went on to be a nurse. She lived in the north most of her life and is now relocated in Athens, AL.

This is Berea College. This is the college these guys over here—every single one of them—voted to target by making their endowment subject to a tax that would otherwise only apply to the really big schools in the country—the Ivy League schools.

Every year, Berea uses the returns on its endowment solely for scholarships, and that sets it apart from nearly every other college and university in the Nation. I worked with the Finance Committee to include a provision to protect schools like Berea from taxes on endowments that apply to private schools who choose to sit on these large funds rather than using them aggressively to reduce the cost of attending school. But Senate Democrats identified this exemption as a bridge too far. Instead of allowing the provision to stand, thereby protecting these students at schools like Berea, they decided to pick partisan politics and attack the measure simply because they could. In the process, they assured that Berea would bear the brunt of their blatant political calculation.

Because Democrats stripped this part of the bill, Berea estimates it could pay a tax penalty of nearly \$1 million every year. Berea's president has already explained to us the effect of this tax: The school will be forced to offer fewer scholarships to kids.

The junior Senator from Vermont and his allies, which included every single Member of the Democratic conference, have chosen to make it harder for low-income students to earn a college degree. This is especially hypocritical coming from the man who claims to support free college for all. During the Presidential campaign last year, I remember he was promising free college to everyone. Apparently, that

is free college to everyone except at Berea College, where it is already free, thanks to generations of donors who built their endowment.

I am at a loss for words. I don't understand how they can claim to fight for students one moment and then make it harder for students to afford college the next. They chose to attack the tax bill by any means necessary, even though they knew the outcome and, in the process, launched a direct attack on the ability of schools like Berea to provide tuition-free education to needy students.

This action by Senate Democrats is deeply disappointing and will provide real and lasting harm. I hope my friends on the other side of the aisle realize the American people will see their partisan tactics for what they really are—an attack on low-income students who want to pursue opportunity and find success.

A number of my colleagues in Congress have said they are interested in fixing this problem, including my colleague from Kentucky, Congressman ANDY BARR. I am committed to working with him and other Members of Congress, and with schools like Berea, to help right this wrong. It is hard not to repeat. This amendment was offered by the man who wanted to provide every student in America with free college tuition but at the same time wanted to reduce the number of scholarships at a college where it is already free, actually, thanks to the generosity of decades of wealthy people who gave to their endowment, believing the mission of providing a college education for poor kids from Appalachia was a worthy goal. We are going to fix this problem. We are going to fix it as soon as we can.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, the Senate has important business to conclude this week. The American people are counting on Congress to reach a government funding agreement. If we were to fail to reach an agreement, we would be failing to ensure that our all-volunteer Armed Forces have all of the resources they need to protect our country in the face of myriad threats from all around the globe. We would be subjecting programs that American families rely on to draconian sequestration cuts that none of us want to take effect.

The Senate stands ready to take up an agreement as soon as one originates over in the House. We are ready to work together, across the aisle, to ensure there is no lapse in funding for critical services. Furthermore, my Republican colleagues in the Senate stand ready and eager to ensure full and long-term funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program. There are 9 million children who receive coverage through CHIP. They and their parents deserve to know that Congress is committed to them.

Republicans agree. We support a provision that would fund CHIP not just for a few weeks but for 5 years. Unfortunately, our Democratic colleagues are unwilling to make that commitment to American families. Thus far, they have opposed all of our efforts to include 5 years of CHIP funding in this week's agreement. Whatever partisan politics are leading my colleagues on the other side to this mystifying conclusion, it is time to put them aside and do right by our constituents. I hope we can all work together and give Americans the peace of mind they deserve, particularly going into the Christmas season.

TRIBUTE TO LUTHER STRANGE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on a completely different matter, I would like to say a few words in tribute to a fine colleague whose all-too-brief time in the Senate will soon draw to a close.

Senator LUTHER STRANGE of Alabama is the newest Member of this body, having been sworn in just this past February, but he did not waste any time in making an impact. In this historic year for the Senate, LUTHER quickly emerged as a strong voice on policy and an important vote on landmark legislation.

On a personal level, it didn't take anyone long to realize that this newcomer would rank among the most diligent, dedicated, and public-spirited Members of this institution. At first, we even wondered whether LUTHER might be a little too diligent.

Upon his arriving in Washington, the Senator dived into the task of meeting his colleagues with the friendly earnestness that is his calling card. The first time LUTHER passed Senator ROBERTS in a Capitol hallway, he stopped to introduce himself and share his excitement to be joining the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee. There was nothing unusual there, but I have it on good authority that the very next day, when LUTHER found himself sharing an elevator with Senator ROBERTS, the junior Senator from Alabama introduced himself all over again. Not long after, a chance meeting on the train occasioned yet a third introduction. PAT ROBERTS had to put a stop to it.

"Yes, Luther," he broke in. "I think we've met before—and we're sure glad to have you here, too." We certainly were glad as well.

LUTHER came to the Senate with a national reputation for integrity and excellence in public service. That started young. The proud son of a Navy veteran turned college professor, this Birmingham paperboy made Eagle Scout at age 13—an accomplishment that still shows up on his lapel from time to time.

He received his bachelor's from Tulane, where—and I know this may come as a shock—the man the Senate historian has apparently verified as the tallest Senator in history played scholarship basketball.

After graduation, to save for law school, he spent a year on a boat that supplied oil rigs in the North Sea. He pitched in on everything—did whatever it took to help the team—and helped the crew navigate the ship through choppy waters.

These qualities will sound familiar to everyone who has worked with LUTHER since.

He built a sterling reputation as an up-and-coming lawyer in private practice. He then set it aside to serve the people of the State he loves as Alabama's attorney general.

In the fine Alabama tradition of public servants, like his friends and mentors Jeff Sessions and RICHARD SHELBY, he combined a steel spine with a servant's heart. Whenever the people of the State needed defending—their businesses, their religious liberties, their Second Amendment rights—their attorney general was there for them.

Then as now, he fought fiercely when times required it and his principles demanded it, but no matter how important the issue at hand, from the Supreme Court to the Senate floor, LUTHER never loses his good humor or his conviction that we serve in order to help our constituents, not to aggrandize ourselves.

LUTHER STRANGE reminds us that character counts. He reminds us that deeply held conservative values do not in any way stand opposed to collegiality and common decency. To the contrary, our values require these things.

He reminds us that the American people need not choose between leaders who share their principles and leaders who dignify public service. They should hold their elected officials to a high standard and demand that we do too.

If you cannot tell, LUTHER's colleagues look up to him in more ways than one. We are sorry to see him go.

In the farewell speech that Senator STRANGE delivered on this floor, he challenged his colleagues to revive greater comity in this body. He implored us not to give up on bipartisanship or on building friendships that run deeper than policy disagreements. He reminded us that the Senate's Marble Room, across the hallway from this Chamber, used to be a popular gathering place. Senators from both parties would relax and get to know one another above and beyond the specific disputes of the day. Today, LUTHER pointed out, this room often sits empty.

His advice is well taken, and I have an idea how we could begin to put it into practice. All of us on both sides of the aisle could try to approach our work with more of the optimism, can-do spirit, and reverence for this great institution that LUTHER STRANGE has brought to work every single day.

Of course, the Senate's loss will be a happy gain for LUTHER's beloved family.

Despite the fact that his bright idea for a first date with Melissa was a trip

to the Talladega Superspeedway to take in the Talladega 500, he convinced her to marry him anyway. Their loving partnership has now spanned 36 years and counting. They have raised two sons. I hear that Luke is just an inch shy of his dad's height and that Keehn is an inch taller. In recent years, LUTHER and Melissa have become the proud grandparents of two young boys.

I have it on good authority that a certain black Lab named Sophie might be the most excited of all the Stranges to welcome the Senator back home to Birmingham.

Wherever LUTHER's distinguished career takes him next, I know he is glad it will involve more time with the people he loves most.

He has served with distinction in the Senate during a year of historic achievements. On behalf of Alabamians, he has made vital contributions on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; Armed Services; Budget; and Energy and Natural Resources Committees. He has cast votes to help middle-class families and set America on a brighter trajectory for years to come.

We thank him and wish him every success in his future endeavors, and we salute him for the dedicated service he has rendered to his country and to the people of the great State of Alabama.

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, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 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. HATCH. 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.

WORK OF THE REPUBLICAN-LED CONGRESS

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, often here in Washington, it can be difficult to focus on what counts.

We live in an information environment which is increasingly atomized and persistently polarized. Almost all will inevitably focus on who is up and who is down in the endless cycle of partisan gamesmanship. News cycles come and news cycles go. Poll numbers jump, then fall, then jump again, and fall again, but nobody should forget that

what really matters around here, at the end of the day, is policy, and the first year of unified Republican government has delivered plenty of that.

In 2016, the American people faced a stark choice. The Republicans promised a new era of deregulation and limited government—a new policy approach that would entrust free markets and free citizens to drive us forward. The Democrats, on the other hand, renewed and restated their faith in the effectiveness of government, centered here in Washington, to direct and command the national welfare. The American people spoke loudly, and they spoke decisively. The Republicans were given the reins and were instructed to sort all of this out.

Nobody needs to remind me that elections are the beginning of the challenge, not the end. The Republicans may have prevailed in the campaign, but an election won is nothing more than an opportunity seized. It is nothing more than a charge to carry out the promises offered on the trail, and that is precisely what we are doing.

Here in the Senate, despite fits and starts, we are moving the ball forward. Notwithstanding often vicious treatment by the media and the constant obstruction of the Democrats here in Congress, we are getting work done. Promises made in 2016 have become promises kept in 2017. The American people were promised the removal of redtape and infuriating bureaucratic encumbrances on economic growth. As soon as we took office in early 2017, we moved to do just that.

We confirmed Neomi Rao as the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. Under her stewardship, the Executive has cut over a dozen old rules for every single new rule created. Regulation has been subjected to actual cost-savings analysis, and, likely, billions have been saved in the process.

Here in Congress we passed a dozen CRAs to cut down on costly and ineffective rules passed in the twilight hours of the Obama administration. The list of deregulatory items speaks for itself: restoration of free markets and free competition on internet, done; new environmental policy to unleash the potential of American energy production, done; reform of public lands designation and renewal of State and local control over western territories, done; Labor Department reform that restores bargaining power to employees and employers rather than unions and bureaucrats, done. On nearly every front, from education to justice issues and everything in between, there has been substantial progress.

Personnel are often the catalyst to policy, and we still have nominations in several agencies to come. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is in good hands with Mick Mulvaney and will eventually be handed off to a capable permanent Director. Federal Trade Commission nominations should be arriving shortly, and just recently the

Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously reported the next Director of the USPTO, Andrei Iancu. As a long-time champion of intellectual property rights, and head of the High-Tech Task Force, I encourage my colleagues to swiftly confirm him to this post.

Overall, this President has delivered on his nominations, and his nominees have delivered on his promises. While I am on the topic of nominations, I want to talk about the judiciary. Controversy seems to be swirling, due to a few recent—and I would say unfortunate—bumps in the road, but we must not miss the forest no matter how much the press would like to harken on a few of the trees. The accomplishments of this administration and Senate in addressing the judiciary have been historic.

Neil Gorsuch was a superb choice for the Supreme Court. At a critical juncture for our courts, he stands poised to seize the mantle left by Justice Antonin Scalia and carry the cause of originalism and textualism forward for a new generation, but Justice Gorsuch was only the beginning. From the circuit courts to the district courts, judicial nominations across the board have really been outstanding. We have confirmed more circuit court nominees this year than in any President's first year in American history.

We accomplished this despite Democrats using their time-tested obstruction tactics and even coming up with some new ones. They forced us to take 18 cloture votes on judicial nominees alone this year, compared to just one cloture vote during the first year of all previous Presidents combined. Nevertheless, we got the job done. The results will be felt for decades to come.

Whatever our differences on other issues, conservatives across the board heartily approve of the way this administration has handled judicial nominations.

I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Senate Judiciary Committee, as well as Leader MCCONNELL, to confirm these judges. As the rest of our agenda gains steam, judicial selection will remain the vanguard. There are more judges to come this new year, and we are going to keep on confirming them. Each and every week, a new trial or appellate court judge will add to the ranks of a rapidly improving judiciary.

Finally, on the legislative front, this administration and Republican Congress have just delivered the most consequential and far-reaching tax reform package in 30 years. When other administrations and other sessions of Congress couldn't get it done, we did. Individuals will see their tax rates drop. Businesses, from large corporations that employ thousands to small businesses paying passthrough rates, will enjoy new capital for investment, expansion, and more. In fact, seemingly to the dismay of our Democratic colleagues, businesses are already responding to the good news with announcements of bonuses and new ventures, and that is just the beginning.

On top of it all, the individual mandate has been repealed and ObamaCare is now firmly on its way out, thank goodness. Despite earlier difficulties, we are well on our way toward repeal. As we move toward 2018, we can look forward to additional policy success on everything from entitlements to infrastructure to immigration.

In conclusion, I don't want to hear anyone claim that this President and this Congress have not gotten things done. Promises were made and promises were kept. Only a year into things, we are making good on our pledge for historic change in Washington.

NOMINATION OF RYAN NELSON

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, on another matter, I would like to offer a few words of support for the nomination of Ryan Nelson to be the Solicitor for the Department of Interior.

Mr. Nelson has a distinguished legal background. He has worked in both the private and public sector, including in all three branches of the Federal Government. Most importantly, he is respected by those members of the Idaho State Bar who know him best.

He has been endorsed by numerous colleagues representing a broad spectrum of political views. Mr. Nelson's exemplary legal background makes him ideally suited to serve as the Department of Interior's Solicitor, and we owe the people of Utah and the West the opportunity to confirm him at once.

Once confirmed, I am very eager to work with Mr. Nelson and Secretary Ryan Zinke to continue a shared mission of restoring trust between the Federal Government and the people of the West.

There have been some marvelous changes this year, and there will be even more if we could just work together and quit all the bumbling around here as though we hate each other. I am grateful for my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I believe we have made important strides this year, and I think we can make even more. I am grateful for what we have been able to get done this year.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Thank you, Mr. President.

I ask to speak in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this morning to outline some ideas about our national security as we approach the end of the year.

Many Americans are heading into the holiday season with some very reasonable fears about the threats facing our Nation. In 2017, we saw an emboldened North Korean regime testing missiles and nuclear weapons. Terrorist groups

continue to execute attacks across the globe. Violent state and nonstate actors continue to destabilize Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Yemen, Nigeria, and others. We saw Russia continue meddling in elections, just as they did in ours last year.

This is a year of great volatility and uncertainty. However, we also saw the U.S. military leading an international coalition that is loosening the stranglehold ISIS had on parts of Iraq and Syria. We saw the recovery of American hostages, including constituents of mine, held captive for years by terrorists. In Europe, U.S. and NATO forces partnered to counter Russian aggression and dispel propaganda. U.S. development assistance projects helped hundreds of millions of people across the world, including 11 million farmers and 27½ million children under the Feed the Future Program.

Even when it seemed like there were many reasons to be afraid, the U.S. military, diplomats, and development professionals were responsible for a lot of good progress this year.

On Monday of this week, President Trump laid out his administration's national security strategy. I commend the work of the national security professionals who crafted the document which warrants a thorough review. It is a substantial body of work, but it paints a very dark picture of the world and our role in it.

A little more than 2 years ago, I stood on this floor and invoked the words of Senator Vandenberg—the Senator from Michigan back in the World War II era—for “maximum united effort” and Senator Vandenberg's admonition that politics should stop at the water's edge. When I spoke these words, this was at a time when it seemed the only response my Republican colleagues had to the Obama administration's foreign policy moves was categorical condemnation.

I will not categorically condemn the administration's new strategy, but I will pose a challenge to reject the false choice between investing at home and engaging abroad; utilize our diplomatic and development toolkit as much, if not more, than we exercise our defense capabilities; lead by example. The world will indeed become a dark place if we hide America's light under a bushel basket, to use words from Scripture.

In the face of our adversaries' aggression, we can choose between competition and cooperation. The new strategy outlined by the administration references competition nearly three times more than cooperation. I suggest to the administration the words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who said: “Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is a thing we must strive for today, begins where competition leaves off.”

Mr. President, I yield to the distinguished Democratic leader.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

THANKING THE SENATOR FROM PENNSYLVANIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I very much thank my friend from Pennsylvania. As always, he is a gentleman as well as a great legislator and great leader. I meant those words very sincerely, unrelated to his yielding to me.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on year-end issues, we are staring down a litany of unresolved issues, and we are quickly running out of time to solve them. Not only do we need to pass an extension of government funding, but as I have said many times, we need to deal with budget caps, CHIP, community health centers, 702 FISA, a disaster supplemental, and of course the Dreamers.

I believe we could have resolved all of these issues had my Republican colleagues, especially in the House, not put them on the back burner while jamming through their tax bill. It is unclear still what the House is going to send us to keep the government open and whether it will be acceptable to the Senate.

At the same time, the House may move forward on an unacceptable disaster supplemental which still does not treat fairly California, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It doesn't include, as best we know—they are still working on it—cost sharing for Puerto Rico and additional funding for Medicaid, mitigation resiliency, and drinking water infrastructure. While House Republicans included some tax provisions in the disaster supplemental, they failed to extend the ITC for Puerto Rico, extend the childcare tax credit consistent with other States, and the tax bill also includes a devastating new business tax that treats Puerto Rico as if it is a foreign country, which could encourage manufacturers to leave the island. This tax could cost thousands of jobs and decimate Puerto Rico's economy at exactly the time when Puerto Rico is hurting from the hurricanes and needs all the help it can get. Those issues must be fixed before a disaster supplemental can move forward. Because of these inadequacies, the disaster supplemental may have to slip to next year. I think we can work it out in a bipartisan way—I certainly do—but just jamming it through without consulting us and not being fair to so many other parts of the country doesn't make sense.

Unfortunately, we still have not reached a deal yet on the Dreamers, who are very important not only to my caucus, not only to some on the Republican side but to the American people.

They have overwhelming support. These kids were brought here very young, through no fault of their own. They learn in our schools, work at our companies, serve in our military, and pledge allegiance to our flag. They are Americans in every single important way but one—their paperwork. This is an issue we have a moral imperative to solve here in Congress.

Democrats want to make sure that we have equal bargaining, and we are not going to allow things like disaster relief go forward without discussing some of the other issues we care about that I have mentioned. We have to solve these issues together, even if that means passing a clean, short-term CR extension of government funding with some anomalies—we always understand there always have to be some anomalies but not those that change the structure—and continuing the negotiations into January.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, on tax. Earlier this week, the Senate passed one of the worst pieces of legislation in at least a decade, maybe longer. The Republican tax bill will go down in history as a rushed, sloppy, partisan rewrite of the Tax Code that benefited those who already have so much while doing little or hurting those who have too little. It will be remembered as throwing the extraordinary income inequality we see today into overdrive and fulfilling very few of the ambitious Republican promises about growth, job creation, and deficit reduction. But perhaps most of all, the Republican tax bill will define the Republican Party as the party of the rich and powerful, the party against the middle class, and that will be a rubric we will hear from now until next November and even further on.

Yesterday in the Oval Office, President Trump admitted that cutting the corporate tax rate was “probably the biggest factor in our plan.” Despite all his rhetoric about this being a middle-class tax bill, as soon as it passes, he admits that lowering the corporate rate was the Republicans' primary goal.

As corporations get a massive, permanent tax break, individuals will get small and temporary ones. By 2027, 145 million American families making under \$200,000—83 percent of the middle class—will be either paying more in taxes or get a cut of less than \$100. That is according to the Joint Committee on Taxation—no partisan affiliation. Meanwhile, the top 1 percent of income earners in our country will reap 83 percent of the benefits from this tax plan. Those facts are what make this bill so dramatically unpopular with the American people by a 2-to-1 margin in some polls, and next year the American people will have the opportunity to reject this bill and move our country in a different direction.

SPECIAL COUNSEL MUELLER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on Special Prosecutor Mueller, I want to take a moment to praise my friend from Virginia, Senator MARK WARNER, vice chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, for his speech yesterday about Special Counsel Mueller. It was an eloquent speech. I would like to associate myself with the substance of his fine remarks. If the President were to fire Special Counsel Mueller, our country would face a constitutional crisis. As my colleague from Virginia said, it would cross a redline. Additionally, there are steps below that brash and brazen act that would also cross redlines here in Congress, as Senator WARNER noted, including the use of the Presidential pardon on members of the Trump campaign who have been convicted, whether those pardons are intended to subvert the investigation or prevent testimony and further cooperation.

So I say to my colleagues, just as firing Special Prosecutor Mueller would cross a redline, so would pardoning people like Manafort and Flynn. The bottom line is this: President Trump must allow this investigation to proceed without a scintilla of interference. He would be wise to listen to Senator WARNER's speech yesterday and act accordingly.

THE REPUBLICAN-LED SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Mr. President, since this is the last time I might be able to address this Chamber before the end of the year—let's hope so—I would like to look back at what the Senate has accomplished this year. The long and short of it, though, is that the Senate has not accomplished much to be proud of.

Despite winning only a slim majority in the last election—a condition that made this year ripe for cooperation between the parties—the Republicans used their power not to seek consensus or bipartisanship but, rather, to try to jam through a partisan agenda.

My friend the majority leader once promised that if he were ever given the majority, he would return the body to regular order. He cautioned against the Senate becoming an “assembly line for one party's partisan legislative agenda.” That is what MITCH MCCONNELL said a few years ago. Sadly, that is exactly what the Senate has become under his leadership this year. For a man who professed to love the Senate and relish bipartisanship, this is probably the most partisan Senate that I have served in in all the years I have been here, and we have departed from regular order and the customs of the Senate in ways never seen before. For what end? Well, this Chamber, under Republican leadership, has devoted itself to furthering the interests of the wealthy and powerful, while ignoring or harming the interests of the middle class and working America.

Republicans will argue that they had a great year, pointing to three things—Judge Gorsuch, the use of the Congressional Review Act to roll back regulations, and their tax bill. All three of those things help the rich and they will help corporations, but they won't help the middle class.

Senate Republicans engaged in historic obstruction to keep a Supreme Court seat open so the Heritage Foundation and Federalist Society could pick a Justice who would rule on the side of corporations instead of people.

Senate Republicans jammed through Congressional Review Act bills that rolled back protections for women, students, and workers, while lifting requirements placed on bad actors in the big oil, gas, mining, and gun industries.

They capped the year by passing a tax bill that provides huge tax breaks for the rich and biggest corporations, while providing crumbs and even tax hikes for the middle class.

They tried for months to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which would send costs soaring for millions of Americans and cause millions more to lose coverage.

They failed to fully authorize CHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and failed to rebuild our infrastructure, despite the President's promises.

The stock market is up, but wages are flat or nearly flat. The President and Republicans promised that they would stop outsourcing, and that hasn't happened. Even companies the President said he would personally save have sent jobs to Mexico, leaving families in the Midwest and across the country without the income they need this holiday season.

Time and time again, the middle class was an afterthought or simply forgotten by Senate Republicans and President Trump. That has been the story of the year. Republicans haven't accomplished much, but what they have accomplished has only benefited the wealthy and well connected.

The Senate's record this year has exposed the faux populism at the center of President Trump's political identity. Although he rode into office promising to help the forgotten man and woman, those are exactly the people he has forgotten, abandoning them in favor of wealthy special interests. Populism, unfortunately, under President Trump, has been traded for plutocracy.

The millions of Americans in 2016 who were frustrated at a Washington that didn't work for them feel more frustrated today, and the millions of working men and women who voted for President Trump—many of them are already feeling betrayed.

We hope that the future will be different and that our Republican friends realize that their legislative and political goals are better served by bipartisanship and compromise rather than gridlock and strife. If they do, we are willing and ready to work with them, but if they don't, voters will have a

chance to move our country in a dramatically different direction in 2018. We are already seeing a yearning for that new direction in elections in Virginia, New Jersey, Tennessee, and even in deep red Alabama. If the Republicans continue to hurt the middle class and give handouts to big corporations and the wealthy, they are in for a reckoning next November.

I yield the floor, and I thank my colleague from Pennsylvania for his courtesy.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I want to thank the Democratic leader for his remarks.

When I was speaking a few moments ago about national security, I had made a suggestion to the administration that there is a national security strategy that has been outlined and that the administration reject the false choice between investing at home and engaging abroad and make sure that they utilize our diplomatic and development toolkits as much as if not more than they exercise our defense capabilities.

We have major challenges, and that is why I think it is important to outline this morning some of those challenges and some of our responses as we head into the new year.

Just for discussion purposes, I wanted to paint the picture of a nation that—it doesn't describe one nation, but I think we can imagine a country that fits this description or at least a number of countries that might. Imagine a sovereign state, a member of the United Nations, a nation whose leaders are singularly focused on staying in power and who will do anything to remain in power, including undermining their colleagues and erstwhile friends. In this country I am describing, those who speak truth to power are dismissed, ridiculed, or, at worst, treated as criminals. This particular country or profile of a country looks inward, putting its domestic troubles first as its reputation in the world declines. Out of fear of its near-peer competitors, the country retreats from diplomatic engagement and doubles down on military capabilities. Does this sound familiar? It might to some. It may describe a number of countries in whole or in part.

Of course, there are a number of countries that fit this description. Certainly, the dictatorial regimes that rule North Korea, Syria, and Iran prioritize self-preservation over the welfare of their citizens. In Russia and China, journalists and opposition leaders are regularly silenced, jailed, or worse.

Here in the United States, we are going through an especially turbulent chapter in the American story. As we celebrate the holidays, we might be dreading the inevitable political de-

bates with family members or friends whose views differ from ours. However, in that fictitious, oppressive country that I described earlier, you can't have these debates, or you can try, but you won't last too long because the authorities will come knocking.

That is what is great about our country. The United States is the land of the free and the home of the brave, and I am reminded of that every time I meet with servicemembers and veterans who are willing to put their lives on the line every day to defend our inalienable rights to criticize and to disagree with our leaders.

So what about this new strategy that the administration just outlined this week? This new strategy states, in pertinent part, that "America possesses unmatched political, economic, military, and technological advantages." That is what the strategy says, and that is certainly true. But I think we should add a few other advantages, even attributes, that are part of the American story, part of the American advantage.

Certainly, our history of generosity sets us apart from the world, a tradition of pluralism as well, the freedom to debate and dissent without fear, the respect for the rule of law, and finally a culture of innovation unmatched anywhere in the world. As I have said before, Americans don't wait for the future; we invent the future.

Through the execution of its strategy, the administration has an opportunity to invent the future of our Nation, as well as its role in the world—a future where the American economy is firing on all cylinders, where investments here at home lift up everyone, where our researchers and manufacturers lead the world in the production of cutting-edge technologies.

For the last 11 months, this administration has sent the world mixed signals about what "America first" really means, from pulling out of the Paris climate agreement, to threatening to walk away from NATO, to hollering out the State Department. I believe the strategy implementation presents an opportunity to reverse that course. We cannot turn away from the world and try to go it alone. We should ask our allies, certainly, to pull their weight and pay their fair share. Whether it is NATO or the counter-ISIS coalition, the United States can always press our partners to do more, but not by threatening that we will abandon these alliances or by creating any uncertainty about these alliances. Simply put, we need partners to tackle some of the greatest threats facing our Nation and the world.

Let's go through a couple of them.

North Korea is first on the list. The North Korean regime is unpredictable and armed with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and the means to deliver them. Just across the demilitarized zone are tens of thousands of U.S. forces and our South Korean allies. Just across the water are more

U.S. military personnel and our Japanese allies. This regime is a significant threat—the North Korean regime. It is a threat exacerbated by reckless ridicule, bombastic statements, and ill-considered tweets. One miscalculation can be disastrous. The administration should accelerate serious, sober diplomacy in lockstep with our allies. For the New Year, let's agree to a new rule for all of us—both branches of government: Leave the tweets for domestic policy only. Sound foreign policy and security policy cannot be done in 280 characters.

Congress has offered the administration powerful leverage in this circumstance in the form of several pieces of legislation. First, the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act passed this summer, and the Banking Restrictions Involving North Korea Act is pending before the Senate now. I support these tough, bipartisan sanctions measures because I believe turning the economic screws, coupled with genuine diplomacy, can yield results. In the New Year, I urge the President to tone down the rhetoric and to empower the Secretary of State and our senior diplomats to find a diplomatic path toward a stable North Korea that doesn't threaten the United States or our allies.

How about terrorist groups around the world? Over the last 16 years, the U.S. military, the intelligence community, and our homeland security professionals have worked hand in hand to meet the rise of terrorist groups head on. We owe the men and women in uniform a debt of gratitude for tirelessly leading the coalition fight that has rolled back ISIS's territorial gains. Implementing the administration's new strategy and its call to fight terrorism at its source is not just about the military fight. The United States should also lead the international community in addressing the underlying issues that drive terrorist recruitment and help to rebuild communities newly liberated from terrorist control.

Think about this. More than 65 million people around the world are displaced from their homes right now. There is no purely military solution for this refugee crisis. A successful counterterrorism strategy requires us to work with our partners for information sharing and for contributions of development assistance.

Another trouble spot in the world is Syria. In Syria, the connection between instability, displacement, and terrorism is clear. This conflict has been raging for nearly 7 years. In the absence of U.S. engagement on a political solution to this crisis, regional powers—namely, Russia, Iran, and Turkey—have run the table, to the benefit of the murderous Assad regime and at the expense of the Syrian people. The United States has abdicated its leadership role and ceded control of the outcome to nations with interests often in direct conflict with our own.

Recently, we learned that the administration will endorse a political tran-

sition plan that leaves Bashar al-Assad in power for at least another 4 years. This is unacceptable and dangerous. Assad is responsible for terrible war crimes that led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Syrians and the displacement of millions more. The strategy outlined by the administration says: "We will seek a settlement to the Syrian civil war that sets the conditions for refugees to return home and rebuild their lives and safety."

I agree with that goal. Most people would agree with that goal, but the administration has missed the bigger picture. We need a strategy that pushes back on Russian and Iranian influence in Syria and addresses the underlying grievances that led to the conflict in the first place.

Let me move to Iran. The Iranian regime remains a powerful force for instability in the Middle East, especially through its support of terrorist proxies and militias. We know that the Iranians want to maintain control of territory linking Tehran with Beirut. So they will continue to act against U.S. interests in Iraq and Syria. Here, again, Congress has offered powerful tools to the administration in the form of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.

The nuclear deal with Iran is giving us an unprecedented visibility on the Iranian nuclear program, but the multilateral diplomatic channels built alongside that agreement have atrophied under this administration. Every time the President threatens to walk away from the Iran nuclear deal, he sends a clear signal to our allies and adversaries alike: U.S. commitments are written in disappearing ink.

If the administration wants to get tough on Iran's nonnuclear bad behavior, there are concrete steps to take today:

No. 1, work with our allies to step up maritime interdictions of any illicit weapons traffic to or from Iran.

No. 2, push the Europeans to do more to combat the financial networks that enrich the Iranian terrorist proxy, Hezbollah. My bipartisan Stop Terrorist Operational Resources and Money Act, or the so-called STORM Act, which is bipartisan, could help with that.

No. 3, begin diplomatic conversations with our allies about a multilateral strategy to curtail the Iranian ballistic missile program.

All of these efforts take cooperation with our allies, which the President makes harder every time he calls into question the future of the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Finally, as to Russia and China, the new strategy by this administration repeatedly describes Russia and China as our competitors. Let me be clear. These countries are not our friends. They actively work against U.S. interests. They are threatened by American military dominance and economic power, and both are trying to game the system to undermine our advantages.

China systemically, perniciously games the international trade system to its advantage. I firmly believe American workers and industry can outinnovate and outproduce any others in the world when the playing field is level. Driven by similar motives, Russia has meddled in elections across the Western world, trying to undermine confidence in one of our most fundamental institutions of democracy. Again, there are concrete steps the administration can take to counter these threats from both China and Russia: No. 1, shore up our electoral systems and help others do the same; No. 2, counter propaganda; No. 3, fight corruption; and No. 4, get serious about holding trade cheaters like China accountable.

Through engagement and cooperation, we can lead the rest of the world away from the Cold War-era clash of major powers that Russia and China want to create.

In conclusion, if this outline of some of the threats and challenges posed seems like a tremendous challenge—a great challenge for our Nation—it is because it always has been so. It has always been a challenge.

President Truman once said:

America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination and on unbeatable determination to do the job at hand.

When faced with a challenge, whether it is Pennsylvanians or Americans, we don't shrink inward. We step up. Our adversaries want us to be divided and dispirited. These adversaries underestimate the courage, the imagination, and the determination of the American people.

President Trump might see it differently, but as we close out 2017, I see a world that needs American leadership more than ever. To paraphrase President Kennedy, we should seek not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war but a genuine peace that makes life on Earth worth living. The American people are ready to rise to that challenge. I hope the administration is too.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The majority whip.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would like to speak briefly today about the year we have had here in Washington, DC.

At times along the way, it wasn't easy. There were more than one or two bumps in the road, and there were times when we got discouraged because we weren't able to accomplish everything we wanted to accomplish on the part of the American people. But looking back, I am proud of what we were able to get done.

The first thing is to notice the speed with which President Trump was able to nominate and we were able to confirm Federal judges. Everyone remembers last January when President

Trump nominated Neil Gorsuch to the U.S. Supreme Court. This was an excellent choice. He is an experienced Federal judge and accomplished scholar who understands the proper role of a judge under our Constitution.

I think the weather and my sinuses are not cooperating here at this moment.

I will be back later.

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

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

VETERANS HEALTHCARE

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I am glad to join my colleague Senator TESTER from Montana on the floor for a discussion of our Veterans' Affairs, our accomplishments over the last 3 years and our challenges for the future.

I want to start out my part of the conversation by saying this. Three years ago, the Veterans' Administration was making big headlines. Those headlines were that they weren't working well, our veterans were waiting too long for care, there were failures in our system throughout, and people were looking for an alternative to the VA system because it was in such a quagmire. Thanks to the work of our committee, which the Presiding Officer today is one of those members, we set out to fix a lot of the problems. No. 1 was the hospital in Denver, which is 40 percent finished. It was 3 years behind, and we closed in. That hospital is open today and operating because the Veterans' Affairs Committee of the Senate buckled its shoes, got to work, got the VA fixed, and got the hospital finished.

The most challenging thing we faced were long wait times for appointments for our veterans and veterans' services for healthcare. It was longer than 30 days just for a routine appointment, sometimes being as long as 6 months to wait, and sometimes they were dying before they got called up from the waiting list, which happened in the Arizona case in Phoenix.

We had some tragic stories that came through. Our committee came together and said: We are going to fix this. We are going to put our shoulders to the grindstone, we are going to work out hard, and we are going to make it happen. Like always, fixing anything requires one element, and that is hard work.

This Committee has worked hard—Democrats and Republicans alike. They have been willing to get the new Secretary, Secretary Shulkin, confirmed. To all of his aides—Tom Bowman, who has been a great aide to our committee for a long time, and now is a direct aide to the Secretary. The committee has asked: What is it we need to do to get it fixed?

We started out this year with 11 bills introduced for the Veterans' Administration improvements in terms of healthcare. Ten of those eleven have passed. There is one left. We are going to have a perfect 11-for-11 year, if we get the votes before the end of this year, we get the CARE bill passed for our veterans, but even if that doesn't make it, we have dealt with long waiting lines for determination of benefits for the VA. Those long waiting lines are beginning to dissipate.

We don't have hospitals being shut down because they can't be finished. We have CBOCs being opened because they are being finished. We don't have near as many cases of horror stories in a VA health facility because the facilities are being run better.

Do we have problems? Sure, we have problems. Anytime you have the second largest agency of the Federal Government—which the VA health system is—you are going to have problems, but we are meeting them head-on. We are not running away from them. We have a Secretary who is really willing to work to make it happen.

I cannot say enough about Secretary Shulkin. He has been fantastic. He has been a great worker. He has given President Trump the message, in terms of what our veterans need, the challenge that we need from the White House to join us, and the White House has substantially done so, to help make a lot of improvements.

Working with our ranking member, we decided we would do a number of things: We would end the long wait times for determination of disability, and we have done that. That is in process. We wanted to see to it that the modern access to healthcare was available to all of our veterans, one way or another. We wanted to make sure we came up with creative ideas by using telemedicine and other techniques to deliver healthcare to our veterans.

Most importantly, we knew the Choice Act we passed 3 years ago, led by Senator MCCAIN—who is in our prayers and thoughts every day. I might add from the floor of the Senate today, we wish him the very best if he is listening. Senator MCCAIN went to work and came up with the first aspect of Choice, which passed 3 years ago. I was on the conference committee. We had this crazy idea that we were going to let veterans choose where they want to go for their healthcare. We set up the system to do that. The system worked pretty well in some cases. Senator TESTER will say in rural America it didn't work all that well, in some cases, but it was a good effort of ours to take the private sector in America and make it a force multiplier for the healthcare services delivered to our veterans and expand the access of healthcare to our vets.

Well, now we have before the Senate what we call the Care Act. It is the finishing touches of what was originally in the Choice Act. We are taking the things we learned and repealing what

was wrong. We are taking things we learned are right, and we are enhancing them. I hope every Member of the Senate who can hear my voice today will join me sometime in the next few weeks ahead to finish the job and pass the Care Act. Our committee passed it out 14 to 1, with Democrats and Republicans alike, shoulder to shoulder, voting for it. It is the right thing to do for our vets. We are hopefully going to do the same thing on the floor.

The Care Act does a lot of amazing things, but it takes what we have learned in 3 years and applies it to the real world for our veterans. It says a veteran has a choice for his healthcare, public or private, VA or private sector. The veteran and his or her doctor may determine where they want to go. The physician providing the services who is outside the system will cooperate with the VA, so we have good medical records for that veteran, and they will work together to choose doctors who have the quality, the reputation, and the ability to deliver the service, whether they are in the VA or outside the VA.

The veteran comes first in Veterans Choice. In the Caring for Our Veterans Act, the veteran comes first, not Members of the Senate, not employees of the VA. The veteran comes first, which is what we need to do.

I hope everyone will join Senator TESTER and me in seeing to it, when we get this to the floor—and we are trying every day—that they join us in helping pass the Care Act.

One last thing I want to mention about the Care Act is it also contains the funding necessary to complete the year for the Veterans' Administration in terms of health services. More importantly, it consolidates the stovepipes of funding in the VA so we no longer have this Mickey Mouse game, which we have all experienced for the last 5 or 6 years, where the VA is always running out of money.

The Congress has never cut off the VA. When we had the biggest shutdown 5 or 6 years ago—or potential shutdown for the government that we had, we passed bills that exempted the VA to demonstrate long and hard that we would never leave our veterans in need of healthcare coverage waiting because we couldn't act in the Congress, and that would happen today if that was threatening us.

I want to underline, this is not a matter of anybody threatening anybody. This is a matter of finishing the job for our veterans and seeing to it that the Veterans' Administration has the resources necessary to deliver the services to our veterans.

For those who can hear this plea—and it is a plea—understand I am coming before us today to say three things: One is thank you. Thank you to every Member of the Senate who voted with us to get us where we are today. We have passed 10 of the 11 bills we brought in this year for veterans' healthcare services. Thank you very much.

I say to Senator TESTER, as the ranking member, thank you for your co-operation. We have worked together to find a solution to every impasse we confronted throughout the year.

To the Senator from Alaska, who is presiding today and is a member of the committee, thank you for what you did for those veterans in need in our States that have limited access to healthcare, like Alaska. We need to make sure the Alaskan veteran has the same access and the same benefits they signed up for as one does in Georgia or in any other State.

Senator TESTER from Montana has worked so hard to see to it that rural America has the same type of access. There may not be as many doctors, there may not be as many VA facilities, but we can design a system that gives them the very best access and the very best care for that region where they choose to live.

That is our challenge. Our challenge in the VA is not to say: Well, you should have lived somewhere else. Our challenge is to say we should have concentrated more in the VA to see to it that where you live is the right place to be in terms of veterans' services, and we are going to do that.

Lastly, I thank Secretary Shulkin. He was approved 100 to nothing by the Senate. I believe I am right that he is the only Cabinet member who was confirmed by the Senate 100 to nothing. As everybody knows from watching us the last 8 or 9 months, we haven't agreed on much of anything. We haven't had any unanimous consent votes on hardly anything. We did with David Shulkin, and he has delivered, in response to that 100-to-nothing vote, time and time again, working for our veterans, helping to direct problems, helping to work with us together.

I look forward to next year, as we bring a close to the Care Act and pass it, moving forward with those new things we need to pay attention to.

I look forward to working with Senator TESTER from Montana and the members of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party in our committee.

Remember, we are veterans first. We are Americans first. God bless our veterans. May God bless the United States of America.

I yield to Senator TESTER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I thank Senator ISAKSON for his words. I thank the Presiding Officer, who is currently sitting in the chair, for his work on the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

I want to talk a little bit about Chairman ISAKSON before I talk about the Care Act. Over the last year, I have been able to work with a great man from Georgia who has done great work. When we started out, we talked about doing stuff we could agree upon and set the stuff we disagree upon apart, and it has ended up where we have agreed on a lot of stuff, and we have been able to get a lot of stuff done.

I would just say, in a body that is full of impasse over this last year, Chairman ISAKSON has been a great guy to work with because the fact is, we have set aside the political labels, and we have worked for our veterans in that committee. It is not only JOHNNY and myself, but members on both sides of the aisle in that committee have worked very well together and communicated so very well to make sure we could take care of the needs of our veterans across this country, whether it was in rural America or whether it was in urban America, but our work is not done.

The Care Act Chairman ISAKSON talked about is a very important piece of legislation. It is a bipartisan compromise. It is a bill we all negotiated on, so not everybody got everything. There are always things in it that you wish would be better, regardless of where you are in the spectrum, but this program does a lot of good things for our veterans.

It, first of all, will eliminate the Veterans First Program and replace it with one that is much easier for veterans to navigate in a system that puts in place where the veterans can seek care. It puts that system in the hands of a veteran and their doctor.

This is a bill that passed out of committee 14 to 1, and it has 26 veterans service organizations, representing millions of veterans who have endorsed this bill. It is a good bill.

I wish the Veterans' Administration, which we worked so closely with on this bill, would come out and forcefully endorse it. I think that would help a lot.

What it does is it establishes a Veterans Community Care Program. It merges seven VA community care programs into one program, with one set of rules for both providers and the veterans. It puts the decision of where to seek care in the hands of the veteran and their doctor. No more one-size-fits-all eligibility.

If a local VA doesn't have the equipment for a certain test and there is not another VA locally that can provide that test, the vet can go to the community doc. If the roads to another VA facility are closed for snow, veterans could go to their local doctor rather than waiting for the roads to clear, which is a big issue in rural America.

If a nearer VA clinic has a type of doc a vet needs to see, but there is a community doc closer and the vet has a bad back, that vet can see that doc in that community, as an example. It offers convenient, walk-in care so vets can get care closer to home for minor illnesses.

Third-party administrators—also known as government contractors—will have a smaller role at the local level, and the local VA will have the flexibility of when to use them for scheduling so what makes more sense for the local VA will not be decided by bureaucrats in Washington.

The second thing it does is it improves accountability and trans-

parency of VA's spending. It requires the VA to give Congress more notice when funding levels of programs that impact veterans are running low. It forces the VA to put together a businesslike plan about how it is going to spend taxpayer dollars, and it gives Congress more visibility in the VA contracts. It requires accountability at the medical center, regional, and the Federal levels. If the clinic isn't brought back up to snuff, we know who has failed to do their job.

I could give you a timeline on what has been going on in the last 3 years with the Choice Program—not having enough money, having more than enough money, not having enough money. That will end when we pass this bill. Congress will be able to have the oversight over the Community Care Program that it needs.

It will give long-term certainty to our veterans because a lack of long-term certainty is devastating to those veterans, and it will give those who have served the consistency and the certainty they need. No more band-aids. We need a cure.

The third thing it does is it improves VA resources in healthcare. Veterans tell me, time and time again, once they get through the door, they love the care the VA gives them. I have been told by a number of veterans that VA has saved their lives. The problem has always been getting through the door, and the biggest reason for those delays to get through that door is workforce shortages.

So our bill incentivizes medical staff to work in rural and underserved areas and Tribal VA facilities. It deploys more mobile teams to provide additional care. It removes the barriers for veterans to access telemedicine, including mental health care, closer to home. It brings more nurses and heart and lung specialists to work at the VA and clinical staff to work at vet centers.

The answer to the VA is not privatization. It is to build the VA and use the private sector to fill in the gaps that the VA cannot provide. That is what this bill does.

It also expands the VA caregiver program to veterans of all areas and their caregivers. Right now, the VA caregiver program only applies to post-9/11 veterans. We have a whole lot of veterans—especially the folks from the Vietnam war—who are getting a lot older, and this caregiver program expansion to the veterans before 9/11 is absolutely critical.

So the bottom line is this: We have worked well on the committee. We have put out a good bill. We put out a bill that works for the taxpayer and, most importantly, for the veterans.

This bill is a long-term solution. We don't need another bandaid fix. The Care Act is our long-term solution. It provides the VA what it needs to hire staff for top-notch care. It provides an integrated network of community providers to fill in the gaps for that care.

It is a balance between those two, and the veterans win.

The VSOs are on board. They were part of the discussion on this bill. We talked to the VA extensively to make sure this bill would work for the VA, and they agreed.

As I said earlier, I would love to have the VA come out forcefully for this bill. I think it would help get it passed in this body.

One thing in closing. We are going to pass a temporary stopgap measure for our budget, and VA Choice funding will probably be a part of it. I will tell my colleagues that this is the last bandaid that I am willing to put on the Choice Program. We need a long-term solution, and if we don't get that long-term solution, we are not doing right by our veterans in this country.

With that, I would again like to thank Chairman ISAKSON for his leadership and for his good work on the VA Committee. When we come back here in 2018, hopefully we can get this bill passed early in the session because it is the right thing to do for our veterans.

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. FRANKEN. 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. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for as much time as I may consume.

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

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, this is my final speech on the floor of the U.S. Senate. I have come to the floor many times, as we all have. We come to the floor to cast our votes on bills and amendments. We come here to discuss and debate the issues that are important to our States and to the country. We introduce and explain legislation. We talk about our States and what we learned on our latest visit to a community health center, a farm, or a small business. What we don't talk about all that often is the work of all the men and women on our staffs who make all of this possible.

I have been fortunate to have had a dedicated, hard-working staff both in Washington and in Minnesota, and I have no doubt that they will go on to do great things and to serve our Nation well.

I am also very lucky to have a wonderful family who has stood by me throughout the good times and the tough times of being a Senator. As Senators, we have packed schedules. There are late nights. There are difficult votes on divisive issues and a lot of time invested in better understanding the challenges our constitu-

ents face every day. All too often, that important work doesn't leave enough time for our families. I am grateful for my wife, my children, and their spouses, who stood by me and who have helped me to do my work effectively.

Finally, as I leave the Senate, I take great comfort in knowing that my successor, Senator-designate Tina Smith, has a well-earned reputation for being a smart, diligent, hard-working public servant, and I have no doubt that Senator Smith will serve Minnesotans and all Americans exceptionally well.

When most people think about politics, they think about arguments—the arguments they have around the dinner table, the arguments they have online, and most of all, the arguments we have here in Washington. That is a big part of the reason why a lot of people just don't like politics.

Often, the debate here in Washington can sometimes seem arcane and tough to understand. Other times—especially in recent years—it can be so bitter that it doesn't even feel like we are trying to resolve anything, just venting our spleens at each other. I get that. I get why people want us to stop arguing and start doing stuff.

But since I am leaving the Senate, I thought I would take a big risk and say a few words in favor of arguments. After all, there is no single magic solution that can bring all 100 of us together because there is no one set of values that brought all of us here in the first place. I think many of my colleagues have heard me talk about what brought me to politics and what makes me a Democrat, and it is my wife Fran.

When she was 17 months old, her father, a decorated World War II veteran, died in a car accident, leaving her mom widowed at age 29 with five kids. There was one sibling younger than Franni, Bootsie, who was 3 months old. Franni's family made it—barely, but they made it—thanks to Social Security survivor benefits. Sometimes they had to turn the heat off in the winter. This was in Portland, ME. Sometimes—often—they were hungry because there wasn't enough food. But they made it.

Franni and her three sisters all went to college on combinations of scholarships and Pell grants. At the time, a full Pell grant paid for about 80 percent of a public college education, but today it only pays about 35 percent.

When Bootsie went to high school, my mother-in-law got a GI loan for \$300 and went to college. She got three more loans, graduated from college, and became an elementary school teacher. And because she taught title I kids—poor kids—all her loans were forgiven.

My brother-in-law went into the Coast Guard and became an electrical engineer.

Every member of Franni's family became a productive member of society and a member of the middle class.

They tell you in this country to pull yourself up by your bootstraps, but

first you have to have the boots. The Federal Government, through Social Security survivor benefits and Pell grants and the GI bill and title I, gave my wife's family the boots. That is why I am a Democrat. That is why I am a Democrat.

Over the years, I have heard Democrats and Republicans talk about their own values, the things they believe brought them to politics, the things that make them care about what happens here. I have learned so much from listening to the arguments we have in this country and the arguments we have here in this Chamber. I have learned from Republicans. I have learned to respect but not always agree with their opinions, and I have learned how their backgrounds can lead them to reach, in good faith, a conclusion that I never could have imagined. And, of course, I have learned so much from my fellow Democrats.

But the person I learned the most from is someone who isn't here. For 12 years, the seat I currently occupy was held by Paul Wellstone. As I have said before, Paul was a tireless, passionate champion for working families—for working families in Minnesota and across the Nation. He fought for veterans, for farmers, and for those who simply needed a voice.

Paul was my friend. Paul had a saying that I think perfectly represents the values and the principles for which he fought. He used to say: "We all do better when we all do better." That was Paul's creed. What Paul meant by that is that the whole country—the working poor, the middle class, and the well off—the whole country does better when each and every one of us is able to contribute to and participate fairly in our economy and in our democracy.

I think Paul was right, but not everybody does. Some people's values are different. Some people believe that those at the top are there for a reason and that they shouldn't have to concern themselves with what is going on in the lives of people who haven't been so lucky or even so accomplished. Some people believe honestly—honestly, legitimately, believe—that not everyone deserves to have the same standing in this country. They believe that your standing as a citizen should depend, in part, on where you were born or what you believe or whom you love or what you do for a living. Some people believe that at some fundamental level, we are all in this on our own. I don't agree with any of those values, but I respect that some people hold them, and that is why arguments matter.

When we argue, whether it is across the fence with your neighbor or on a cable news show or here on the floor of the Senate, it can help us sharpen our ability to articulate what we want and challenge us to examine our own views with a more critical eye and help highlight the choice for the American people, because, after all, in a democracy, the people get to choose.

As I prepare to leave the Senate, I have been thinking a lot about my values and Paul's values—the values we share with many of my colleagues here in the Senate and many of the progressive activists I have met and worked alongside in Minnesota and around the country. That is because, regrettably, the policies pursued by the Trump administration and congressional Republicans today could not stand in a starker contrast to the principles Paul championed and the values I have fought for during my time here in the Senate.

The values being advanced by the President and his allies in Congress simply don't represent my belief that our economy, our democracy, and our country work best when they work for everyone. Indeed, the values propelling the Republican agenda today are about consolidating political and economic power in the hands of corporations and the very wealthy.

Just take the tax bill Congress passed this week. At virtually each and every step of the process, Republicans drafting this bill chose to embrace the failed trickle-down policies of the past, crafting an enormous—*an enormous*—giveaway that benefits their corporate campaign backers and wealthy donors. For instance, according to the non-partisan Tax Policy Center, by 2027, 83 percent of the benefits in the Republican tax bill will accrue to the top 1 percent of income earners; that is, people who make more than \$912,000 a year. Eighty-three percent of the benefits go to the top 1 percent. Do we really need any other data point? Well, here is one: At the same time, the Republican tax bill would increase taxes on 35 million low- and middle-income families.

During his inaugural address, President Trump vowed that “the forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer.” But the Republican tax bill represents a slap in the face to those forgotten men and women. I guess the President forgot about them.

Make no mistake, the Senate-passed version of the Republican tax bill was deeply flawed, but when Republicans later attempted to reconcile differences between the House and Senate bills—a process that took place behind closed doors—even more favors were doled out to Republican donors and to special interests. New rules were created to give real estate developers like President Trump and his son-in-law the ability to pay less tax on passthrough income. The top individual rate, which applies to millionaires and billionaires, was cut to 37 percent—a rate lower than either the House or Senate versions of the bill. And provisions in the original bills that were designed to stop foreign corporations from avoiding taxes by shifting their profits overseas—a practice known as earnings stripping—were dropped altogether.

The problem in this country is not that the wealthy aren't doing well

enough. After all, the top 1 percent of the country's population controls nearly 40 percent of its wealth. The problem is that too many working families have been left out of the economic growth that the top 1 percent has enjoyed in recent years. But rather than use the tax reform bill as an opportunity to help those working families, Republicans have instead decided to shower corporations and wealthy donors with tax breaks and special favors.

The tax bill didn't just come out of the blue—quite the contrary. This tax bill comes on the heels of countless Republican attempts to shred policies that offer protection to working families and the environment. But corporations and wealthy donors who support my Republican colleagues believe that these policies stand in the way of their profits.

Take healthcare, for example. Despite President Trump's campaign promise that “We're going to have insurance for everybody,” when his administration attempted to deliver on that promise, House Republicans devised and passed a bill that would have resulted in 23 million fewer people having health insurance, including 14 million people who rely on Medicaid. Facing unprecedented public outcry, Republican Senators eventually proposed a narrower bill—one that didn't repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act outright but instead undermined some of its foundational provisions. But this narrower Senate bill still would have left 16 million more Americans uninsured, all while spiking premiums by 20 percent, according to CBO.

The American people continued to fight, demanding that the Senate kill the bill. Thanks to the incredibly hard work of organizers and activists, including the American Medical Association and everyday Americans, that is exactly what happened. Republican attempts to repeal the ACA failed, but it seems my Republican colleagues have not learned their lesson.

Finding themselves unable to sustain an open assault on the Affordable Care Act, they instead included a measure in the tax bill that will repeal an essential component of that law—the individual mandate. As a result, 13 million fewer Americans will have health insurance in the years to come. But that doesn't matter to President Trump and his allies, who claim they need to repeal this central pillar of ObamaCare in order to pay for the massive tax cuts that their wealthy donors demand.

Those same wealthy donors also demand that Republicans turn a blind eye to climate change—an existential threat to humanity. Climate change is not just an environmental problem. Climate change stands to affect virtually every aspect of our lives, posing a great threat to public health, national security, our country's infrastructure, and our economy. Circumstances require that we take immediate action in order to protect the welfare of future generations.

Almost every Republican in Congress refuses to take the issue of climate change seriously. They continue to deny the underlying evidence and science behind it, even as Americans suffer the devastating consequences of their denial. This year alone, hurricanes ravaged Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and wildfires raged across the West, most recently in Los Angeles.

We know that climate change makes these extreme weather events worse, and this is just the beginning. What we are witnessing is the beginning of a new normal—a new normal that this country simply cannot endure.

It doesn't have to be this way. It is possible to address climate change while at the same time growing our economy and creating jobs. During the Obama administration, the Federal Government increased research and development investments in clean energy technology, both through tax credits designed to incentivize investment and through the energy title that I was proud to help write in the farm bill, which allowed people in rural America to participate in the clean energy revolution. Those investments paid off. Since 2009, the cost of wind power has decreased by 66 percent, and the cost of solar power has dropped by 85 percent. But we need to do more.

I championed an energy efficiency standard that would require utilities to become more efficient. I led legislation to encourage energy storage, a game changer that allows wind and solar to be used when the wind isn't blowing and the sun isn't shining. I pushed to deploy distributed energy that makes our grid more resilient and reliable.

Rather than join me and my Democratic colleagues in confronting the challenge of climate change by driving innovation, Republicans ordered a retreat. At the behest of the fossil fuel industry and other corporate interests, Republicans have put forward nominees for key environmental posts who cut their teeth defending corporate polluters, not enforcing the laws that keep our air and water clean, and they have pushed an agenda that guts funding for science and innovation. The Republican strategy of denial and obfuscation isn't just an affront to the government; it is an affront to common sense.

The Trump administration and its allies in Congress have never let science or common sense stand in the way of ideology. Time and again, they have acted to roll back evidence-based, commonsense protections put in place to improve the lives of minority or marginalized communities, including women and LGBT people.

For example, in October, the Trump administration announced a new rule that guts a provision in the Affordable Care Act that requires health insurance plans to cover birth control free of charge—a policy that has benefited more than 62 million American women.

The ability to access affordable reproductive healthcare has a powerful effect on the choices that women and families make every day—choices about whether to finish college, buy a home, or start a business. Ensuring that women have access to contraception is vital to the economic security of our families, and that is why I filed a brief in support of the ACA's contraceptive coverage requirement when it was challenged before the Supreme Court.

Despite the millions of women who have benefited from the policy, and despite the science demonstrating that restricting access to contraception has negative health consequences, the Trump administration has eviscerated the policy.

In February, the Trump administration rescinded Obama-era guidelines that instructed schools on how to protect transgender students under a Federal law called title IX. LGBT students deserve to learn in an environment free from discrimination, and they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. But far too often, LGBT kids, particularly transgender kids, experience bullying and harassment. When that happens, those students are deprived of an equal education. That is why I led the Senate in calling on the Obama administration to issue those guidelines back in 2015. Nonetheless, the Trump administration decided to scrap that guidance—a callous and mean-spirited decision that sent a terrible message to LGBT children and their parents and took away a tool designed to protect our children. It is our responsibility, not just as Senators but as adults—as adults—to protect our children, not turn a blind eye when they face prejudice and cruelty.

Nothing that Republicans have done is more galling, nothing poses a greater threat to the fabric of our democracy than their deliberate and sustained attack on the right to vote. Let's start with the Supreme Court's disastrous 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, a 5-to-4 decision in which the Court's conservative Justices effectively gutted the Voting Rights Act and eliminated a check on States with a history of discrimination at the polls.

After the *Shelby County* decision, States swiftly began to enact harsh restrictions on the right to vote, in many cases citing the myth of so-called voter fraud as justification.

Take North Carolina, for example. Just a few months after *Shelby County*, the State enacted one of the Nation's strictest voter ID laws. Without any evidence, the State described the new restrictions as necessary to prevent fraud. Without the protections of the Voting Rights Act, those changes went into effect, keeping poor and minority voters from casting a ballot.

When North Carolina's restrictions were eventually challenged in court, the Fourth Circuit found that the primary purpose of the restrictions wasn't to fight fraud but to make it harder for

Black people to vote. The court found that “the new provisions target African Americans with almost surgical precision.”

The fact that North Carolina's restrictions stand as a blatant example of race discrimination is undeniable, but the strategy behind adopting such harsh restrictions is even more insidious. The strategy here is designed to ensure that voters who don't agree with their candidates or their policies aren't able to vote against them.

Paul Wellstone's words are more important today than ever before: “We all do better when we all do better.” I believe that to my core. But the policies pursued by President Trump and his allies are not about lifting people out of poverty or about giving the politically powerless a louder voice in our democracy. These policies are intended to line the pockets of wealthy donors and to protect the power of those who already wield outsized influence in our democracy. That is a far cry from Paul's creed.

When I think about what has gone wrong here, when I reflect on how this country has strayed so far from the values that I believe a majority of Americans share, I have to say that I think there is something wrong with the way we are arguing, and it started long before 2016. Lurking behind each of those issues isn't just a difference of opinion or a difference of values. There is something far worse: a lie.

Take, for example, the Trump administration's efforts to suppress votes. Shortly after winning the Presidential election, then President-Elect Trump was confronted with the unpleasant fact that he lost the popular vote. He tweeted: “In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally.”

Let's be clear. President Trump lost the popular vote by more than 2.8 million votes. What he claimed in that tweet was that nearly 3 million fraudulent votes were cast. In fact, he later claimed that between 3 and 5 million illegal votes caused him to lose the popular vote, citing no evidence.

There were 138 million votes cast in the 2016 Presidential election. State election and law enforcement officials found virtually no credible evidence of fraud, and no States—not one—recorded any indication of widespread fraud—none. But that didn't stop the Trump administration from quickly turning the President's tweets into policy. The White House created a new commission to investigate the President's wild and unsubstantiated claim—a commission led by Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, a rightwing extremist who has made a career out of trafficking in the voter fraud myth and who was fined for repeatedly lying to a Federal court in voter ID litigation. When Kobach was asked whether he believed the President's claim that millions of people voted illegally, he said: We may never

know the answer to that question. Really?

This episode could almost be considered funny if the ramifications weren't so deadly serious. Kobach's voter fraud commission requested sensitive information about voters—including names, dates of birth, party registration, and voting history—from all 50 States. This is information that could lay the groundwork for disenfranchising scores of eligible voters, which is why more than 40 States refused to comply with that request. At the same time, the Trump-Sessions Justice Department quickly dropped legal challenges to discriminatory voting practices in States, further signaling that protecting the right to vote will no longer be a priority of the Justice Department. It is all based on a lie—and not a lie President Trump came up with. Rightwing conservatives have been raising a false alarm about so-called voter fraud for years despite the fact that no credible evidence has ever been produced to demonstrate that it is a real problem.

Or take the Trump administration's attacks on LGBT rights. Again and again, lurking behind these policies are lies—the lie that advocates of LGBT rights want to trample on people's religious freedom, the lie that families led by a gay or a lesbian couple don't provide safe environments for children, the lie that allowing transgender people to use the appropriate bathroom opens the door to sexual assault. President Trump didn't invent these lies, but he and his administration proudly repeat them.

Or take the attacks on science, especially climate science. We now have enough evidence to conclude that climate change is real, and it is man-made. It is a threat to our Nation's security and is an existential threat to the planet. Defense Secretary Mattis knows this; yet, for years, so-called scientists who have been funded by industry have been hard at work in casting doubt on the well-established scientific consensus. Heck, a recent Washington Post report revealed that Trump administration officials have prohibited the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—our Nation's premier public health and research institute—from using the terms “evidence-based” and “science-based” in budget planning documents. President Trump didn't launch the war on science, but now he is leading the charge.

Or take healthcare. President Trump promised that everyone would have insurance, but an analysis by the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office revealed that under the House Republican healthcare bill, 23 million fewer people would have had health insurance than are currently covered today—23 million people. To add insult to injury, the House bill would have hit the most vulnerable among us, and it would have hit them the hardest.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, 14 million of the 23 million people who would have lost coverage

under the House Republicans' plan would have been Medicaid beneficiaries.

That is right. Despite candidate Trump's assurances that "everybody's going to be taken care of much better than they're taken care of now," the Republican bill would have cut funding to Medicaid—a vital safety net program that ensures that our seniors, people with disabilities, pregnant women, and families with children have access to the healthcare they need. On top of that, the Republican plan would have driven up the costs of premiums, with older and sicker people having experienced the deepest increases.

Indeed, the healthcare debate has long been predicated on lies—lies that "well over 90 percent of what Planned Parenthood does" is provide abortion services, the lie that women rely on birth control only because they are sexually promiscuous, the lie that the Affordable Care Act is collapsing under its own weight when, in fact, the Trump administration and the Republicans here in Congress have been doing everything they can do to sabotage it.

Then there is the tax debate. Over the last year, Republicans have repeatedly claimed that they would advance policies that are designed to benefit middle-class families, not the wealthy. President Trump pledged not to forget the "forgotten men and women of our country." Steve Mnuchin, the Secretary of the Treasury, promised that the Republican tax plan would help the middle class. He vowed that any tax cuts for upper income earners would be offset by getting rid of deductions that benefit the wealthy. That is what he said, that "there will be no absolute tax cut for the upper class." Again, 83 percent of the benefits in the Republican tax bill go to the richest 1 percent. What he said is not true.

Just the other day, the White House Press Secretary claimed that President Trump, himself, will pay more because of this bill. We don't know exactly what the effect will be on his personal finances because the White House has refused to release his tax returns. They have claimed in another lie that he cannot release them because they are under audit. You can release tax returns while you are under audit. What we do know is that tax breaks in the Republican bill for real estate developers like President Trump and his family will save him millions upon millions of dollars.

I could go on and on.

Before I came to the Senate, I was known as something of an obsessive on the subject of honesty in public discourse, but as I leave the Senate, I have to admit that it feels as though we are losing the war on truth. Maybe it is already lost. If that is the case, if that is what happens, then we have lost the ability to have the kinds of arguments that have helped to build consensus—I see LAMAR ALEXANDER here; we have done that on the HELP Com-

mittee; I thank the chairman for when we have done that—or at least to have helped the American people make informed choices about the issues that affect their lives.

So what is to be done? Who will stand up and fight for a more honest debate—to insist that even though we have a different set of opinions, we cannot honorably advance our competing agendas unless we use the same set of facts? I hope that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will stand up for truth. The thing is, I have spent enough time with my Republican friends over the last 8½ years to know that they are motivated by values just like Democrats. I just hope that they will fight for those values forthrightly.

At the end of the day, it is going to be up to the American people just as it has always been. We will always have the democracy we deserve, if not the government we want. It is going to take ordinary Americans deciding to become more informed consumers of political news and opinion and deciding that they are willing to be a part of the argument themselves instead of, simply, tuning out all of the noise. If they do, I know that we will get this country back on track.

In October, 15 years after we lost Paul, I took to the Senate floor to remember him and to celebrate his life. Paul understood better than anyone I know the meaning and the power of politics, and I think he would have a lot to say about where we find ourselves today.

Paul said:

Politics is not about power. Politics is not about money. Politics is not about winning for the sake of winning. Politics is about the improvement of people's lives.

Even in the face of everything that is happening today, I still believe in Paul's words: "Politics is about the improvement of people's lives." I know those words to be true because I know that the American people still believe in justice and equality and opportunity, and I see evidence of that every day.

I saw it in January when more than 4 million people across the United States joined in the Women's March. They stood in solidarity with their mothers and sisters and daughters and wives.

I saw it later that same month after President Trump issued an Executive order that sought to ban travelers from Muslim-majority countries from entering our country. Hundreds of lawyers responded to the call to help. They rushed to airports and offered their services in support of affected families.

I saw it in May when a transgender boy in Wisconsin who was discriminated against by his school had the courage to take them to court, and he won.

I saw it in September when tens of thousands of Americans mobilized in opposition to attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act and succeeded in killing the bill.

I also saw it at the ballot box when voters in Virginia and Alabama resisted the temptation to give in to anger and cynicism and, instead, exercised their right to vote.

"Politics is about the improvement of people's lives." The American people know that to be true, and they fill me with hope for our country.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I ask for 3 minutes to talk about my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

TRIBUTES TO AL FRANKEN

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, you heard in Senator FRANKEN's closing words the passion he has for all of the work that he has done in this Chamber and for the people of our State. You saw the love that he has for his family—for Franni—and the love that he has for his staff. They are not good staff; they are wonderful staff.

I think about all of the legacies that AL will leave. One of them is his staff, to whom he has been so devoted. Another is all of the work he has done for veterans, the work he has done for healthcare with the medical loss ratio—one of the major achievements in the Affordable Care Act. One is the work he has done, way ahead of his time, for the LGBTQ community, and another is the work he has done for our Tribal communities. That was his No. 1 ask when he arrived in the Senate—to be on the Indian Affairs Committee. That is not what other people ask for. He did that. Another is the work he did on bullying in schools. For the kids who had no voice, he gave them a voice. Another is the work he did in carrying on Paul Wellstone's work for those with mental illness.

When I think about what I will miss about AL, I will miss, first of all, how he defied expectations when he got elected. I think about all of those headlines that he mentions in his book. No matter what he did in the first few years he was in office, they would read with things like: AL FRANKEN passes a bill. That's no joke. AL FRANKEN gets reelected. That's no joke. Yet he still carried on and defied expectations every single day that he was here.

Another thing I will miss is all of the Senators approaching him in his first few weeks in office with their bad jokes, which he would smile at, and then he would later tell me they were not good jokes.

Another thing I will always miss about AL is the passion he had for his work. I think many people were captivated by the pointed questioning of witnesses and nominees in the last year, but it was that kind of focus that he took to all of his work when he would examine policies he thought were good or bad. He never gave up on that.

The other thing I will greatly miss is sitting next to AL in the Judiciary Committee. While he would do the serious work, he would never miss an opportunity to show me or Senator DURBIN or Senator WHITEHOUSE or anyone near him the latest pictures of his grandchildren and his family or, maybe, the doodles that he did of Senator GRASSLEY.

The other thing I will miss greatly is the way he would talk about Paul Wellstone. Today, he managed to do it without crying, but so many times, whenever he would talk about Paul, he would start to cry. He would do it in private, and he would do it in public because he understood the legacy that Paul left behind and the burden that we all have to carry it on.

One thing I know, as you heard in his last speech, is that when AL leaves here, he will not be quieted in any way. His work will live on, and his voice will be stronger than ever. I think the last call of action that he left us with of the war for truth—for truth in what we do and for truth in our politics—is something that no one should forget in this Chamber. It is one way that AL's work will live on because I know he will keep calling people on the truth.

While I will no longer be sitting next to him in Judiciary, I know we will stay friends forever. I thank Senator FRANKEN so much for his work.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant minority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, years ago, a man with a famous name aspired to be President of the United States. Critics dismissed this idea as ridiculous. One of the leading political columnists of the day wrote that the man's initials stood for "Feather Duster Roosevelt, a lightweight"—nothing to him.

AL FRANKEN's decision to run for a seat in this Senate from Minnesota was met in many quarters with the same sort of mockery.

Many people said: He is a comedian. He doesn't have the knowledge or the skill or the patience or the vision to be a lawmaker. You can't joke your way into the Senate.

The pundits were wrong about FDR. He was one of our greatest Presidents during one of our darkest hours.

Madam President, the doubters were wrong about AL FRANKEN too. AL FRANKEN has been my friend, my personal friend, for more than two decades. For the last 7-plus years, he has been my colleague in the Senate. He has been a credit to the Senate, a passionate advocate for his home State of Minnesota, a defender of our Constitution, and a determined fighter for justice. He became a better Senator every year. His work in the Senate has made life for millions of people better in Minnesota and far beyond. He and his dedicated staff can take pride in that fact. AL FRANKEN has been and I am sure will continue to be an effective champion for those whose daily strug-

gles too often go unnoticed and unaddressed in the places of power.

During his time in the Senate, AL FRANKEN has always been there when his Senate colleagues asked for help. He was one of the most sought-after voices in our party. He never failed to pack a bag, catch a plane, and spend another night away from his family to help each and every one of us.

Twenty years ago, when I first met him, he was this well known, successful comedian on "Saturday Night Live" who happened to play the role of a fellow named Paul Simon, a Senator from Illinois who was my predecessor. Paul Simon invited AL FRANKEN to come to Makanda, IL. It is not even close to Chicago. He agreed on a Sunday afternoon to be there on behalf of my campaign, although we had never met, and he came. He limped onto Paul Simon's front porch, saying: "I twisted my ankle playing squash." I thought it was another perfect example of a reason he could have used to avoid the invitation, but he came anyway. We had a great afternoon and a terrific time with Paul Simon of "Saturday Night Live" and the real Paul Simon and a senatorial candidate who was grateful for AL FRANKEN's presence that day.

When people ask me to describe my politics, I say that I follow the gospel of St. Paul. By that, I mean I try to emulate three of my greatest political heroes, who happen to share that name.

The first Senator, Paul Douglas of Illinois, was a champion of honesty, economic justice, and civil rights, and the man for whom I had the good fortune of interning when I was a college student; Paul Simon, whom I just mentioned, my predecessor from Illinois, who was one of the smartest, most decent men I have ever met in any walk of life; and Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota, who has received many deserved tributes today. Paul Wellstone was the champion of farmers, hotel maids, grocery clerks, cafeteria workers, and everyone who worked hard and struggled for dignity and enough money just to pay the bills.

Paul Wellstone, as we have heard from both Senator KLOBUCHAR and from AL FRANKEN himself, is the man AL FRANKEN chose to emulate in public life. He stated Paul Wellstone's famous quote: "We all do better when we all do better." It is a simple statement, a profound truth, and it has been the guiding light for AL FRANKEN's Senate career.

Senator Wellstone died 15 years ago in a tragic plane crash. On the 10th anniversary of that terrible loss, Senator FRANKEN wrote an essay about Paul Wellstone's legacy for *The Atlantic* magazine. I want to read a short section from that essay.

Senator FRANKEN wrote:

One of Paul's most famous quotes is this: "Politics is not about power. Politics is not about money. Politics is not about winning for the sake of winning. Politics is about the improvement of people's lives."

That quote is often used to criticize those on the other side who seem to forget the human consequences of their political agenda. But progressives should keep it in mind, as well.

The big fights—war and peace, justice and liberty—are important. But there aren't any small fights. And where Paul made the biggest impact—where his work resulted in the greatest improvement of people's lives—was on issues that don't usually lead anyone's stump speech: mental health, domestic violence, homelessness among veterans.

When future historians look back at the legacy of Senator AL FRANKEN, I believe they will say: Here is a man who loved his State and his country, who worked hard to be a good Senator, and who never hesitated to take up an important issue, large or small.

AL FRANKEN and I served together on the Senate Judiciary Committee. Over the years, I have watched him mature into one of the best, most insightful questioners on that committee. His questioning of Supreme Court Nominee Gorsuch, now Supreme Court Justice Gorsuch, helped to expose the Justice's troubling record of ruling against workers and families.

It was a story about a truckdriver who deserted his position on the road-way, was freezing in the middle of the night, who finally got his day in court, and the decision by Judge Gorsuch at the time, in my opinion and AL's opinion, did not serve justice. Many of us raised that issue; no one raised it more effectively than AL FRANKEN.

His probing questioning also exposed Attorney General Sessions for misleading America about his meetings with Russians during the 2016 Presidential campaign.

He has been equally effective on the HELP Committee. His questioning of the future Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, showed her to be unfamiliar with some of the most basic and important debates in education policy and clearly exposed the fact that she was unready to serve as our Nation's leader at the Department of Education.

I guess some people seek elected office to make a name for themselves, but AL FRANKEN didn't need to be a Senator to achieve that. He already had a well-known name as an entertainer, radio host, and best-selling author before he entered politics. He and his wife Franni have a good life, two great kids, and wonderful grandchildren who followed.

Mr. FRANKEN. Terrific. Terrific.

Mr. DURBIN. "Terrific" is the word. Terrific grandchildren who followed.

When it came down to it, AL FRANKEN wanted to do more than just entertain and be well known; he wanted to make a difference in the lives of others. More than anyone, as he said this morning, his wife Franni inspired him. As he explained in his book, her family wasn't as lucky as a lot of us. Her dad died when she was a young baby girl. Her mom raised five kids on Social Security survivor benefits and a paycheck from a local supermarket. But every member of Franni's family

made it to the middle class because of Social Security, Pell grants, the GI bill, and title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

AL writes:

They tell you in this country you have to pull yourself up by your bootstraps. And we all believe that. But first you've got to have the boots. And the federal government gave Franni's family the boots.

"Opportunity is supposed to be for everyone." That is one of the articles of faith animating everything that AL FRANKEN has done or sought to achieve in the Senate.

I am going to miss my friend AL FRANKEN, my colleague, and one of my fellow members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. I am sorry he is leaving under these circumstances, but he is going to be remembered, and he is going to have an opportunity to use his voice for others in the future.

Every person who has ever lived has had moments they wish they could erase and words they wish they could take back. In this life of both calm and stormy seas, we all draw strength from the healing power of redemption, and we can take heart in the knowledge that tomorrow is another day with new opportunities to offer a helping hand and make our lives count.

I am happy to hear AL FRANKEN say that while he may be giving up the Senate, he is not giving up his voice in public life. I wish AL FRANKEN, Franni, and their great family the very best and thank them again for what they have given to all of us.

Madam President, I yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask to speak for 3 minutes on behalf of my departing friend.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, Senator FRANKEN will shortly go on to his next chapter, which I hope will be wonderful for him and for Franni and for their family. I hope and believe that he leaves us with everyone's good will here in the Senate. He certainly leaves with mine.

AL FRANKEN has been an unusually good Senator, in part because he has such a good staff. He has also, to me, been an unusually good friend, particularly in this hard town where you are supposed to buy a dog if you want a friend. We served together on the HELP and Judiciary Committees, where he did great committee work. He stood out particularly for his talent on Judiciary without even being a lawyer.

I will miss him. The Senate will come to miss him, too, I expect. He was a lot of things that one would want in a Senator: principled, innovative, hard-working, supersmart, bipartisan, generous, caring. Things will be different around here without him. It will be quieter on the floor without his big, bursting laugh. We will miss his presence on personal privacy issues, on monopoly power issues, on forced manda-

tory arbitration, and in championing LGBT kids, where he has real passion and expertise.

Senate hearing witnesses who have been up to no good will breathe a lot easier knowing they won't have to face AL FRANKEN's pointed questioning. The Senate Secret Santa, a Franken legacy, will probably continue. Selfishly, I will miss Franni's amazing homemade pies.

As my friend departs, I am left at this difficult moment with this thought: I have been fortunate in the Senate to have had a colleague to whom it is so hard to say good-bye.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, back in 2007 and 2008, a group of us who had never run for Congress or for the Senate jumped into campaigns against incumbent Members of this body, hoping to fight for a vision of government of, by, and for the people. AL FRANKEN was one of those individuals taking on an incumbent, Republican Norm Coleman, and as I heard Senator FRANKEN on the campaign trail, I heard what we heard today in his speech: a willingness to fight for that vision so embodied in our Constitution of government that would provide a foundation for families to thrive, that would lift everyone up; not a government of, by, and for the privileged; not a government of, by, and for the powerful.

It takes a lot of guts to throw yourself into the political world, but because he did and because he won that campaign, we were able to advance a number of policies.

I shared with AL the experience not only of running against an incumbent Republican but not having results on election night. However, I only had to wait 2 days; I didn't have to wait the many months that he did to come and be part of this body.

Because he came, we were able to pass the Affordable Care Act. My home State of Oregon went from 15 percent uninsured to 5 percent uninsured. Hundreds of thousands of people gained access to healthcare through the expansion of Medicaid and through the healthcare exchange made affordable by the tax credits provided by that bill. In that bill, we were able to provide free preventive healthcare practices. We all know that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and we embodied that in the healthcare bill. In that bill, we fought for folks to be able to stay on their parents' policies until age 26. In that bill, we fought to say that if someone had a preexisting condition, they wouldn't have to pay any more than anyone else would, creating healthcare opportunities for millions of people who thought they would never have a chance to have an insurance policy again.

AL FRANKEN threw himself into public life, and he made that happen not just for the folks back home in Minnesota but for people across this entire Nation.

Another such battle was the Dodd-Frank battle, and again I doubt we would have been able to win that battle without his coming to share in that effort. I think about the fact that we had seen so many millions of families devastated by predatory mortgages with exploding interest rates—interest rates that, upon presentation, started at 3 percent or 4 percent but 2 years later would jump to 9 or 10 percent, and a family would end up in foreclosure. The fact is we had Wall Street writing securities based on those mortgages, which then disintegrated in 2007, 2008 and caused people not to just lose their homes but to also lose their jobs, to lose their retirement, and to be incredibly devastated and see their whole lifetime's work to become financially stable evaporate, destroyed, exploded. That CFPB portion, or Consumer Financial Protection Bureau portion, has given us ongoing efforts to take on predatory mortgages and that enables financial instruments to be a foundation for families to thrive and to have home ownership be the dream of home ownership and not the nightmare of home ownership. This, again, is an example of a bill passed because AL FRANKEN threw himself into that battle, and there are many more on this list.

I was particularly appreciative of his support for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. Senator Kennedy, as he was in declining health, had asked me to take on and carry the torch for that bill, which was a huge honor to me as an incoming freshman. I felt he was on my shoulder every day saying: Why haven't you gotten it done yet? In 2013, we finally got it on the floor. I had been pushing hard for leadership to get it on the floor, and we got it on the floor. I thought: What if we lose this bill fighting for equality and to end discrimination in employment? But because AL was here helping in that fight, we won that bill. We did not win it in the House because the House didn't put it on the floor of the House. So it is unfinished business—fighting for equality of opportunity, that vision in our Constitution.

As we heard today, as we heard AL in his campaign in 2008, as we heard AL on the floor today, and we have heard of this fight for a country of, by, and for the people, I know that we are going to hear his voice in that fight for many years to come.

I thank Senator FRANKEN for being willing to put himself in the public world, for being willing to fight here on the floor of the Senate for bill after bill after bill that made life better for Americans and for the many battles he will be in in the years to come. Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. BLUNT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold his suggestion?

Mr. MERKLEY. Yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, we are quickly approaching the end of this year, and I think it is a good time to reflect on what has been done this year. Certainly, the Senate and the Trump administration have been able to do a number of things that are really going to have a significant impact on hard-working families.

Yesterday, we sent the most significant tax reform legislation in more than three decades to the President's desk, and we had a chance to hear the President and others respond to that. The President, at the end of that ceremony at the White House, turned to the Congress and said: "This is the work that you have done." I think the Members of Congress appreciated that. That showed a President who is constantly learning and constantly understanding how important relationships are here.

I thought it was interesting that we heard Chairman BRADY, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, say that there are three important dates about to occur for America's economy and America's families. One is January 1, when the new tax bill goes into effect, and as to the wages people are earning, people are going to be allowed more of those wages to stay in their billfold rather than go to the government's billfold. It doesn't stay very long in the government's billfold; that is for sure. January 1 is important. As for February 1, by then, that is the time by which we hope all of the new information is out to employers, and people are going to see in their February check more money than they saw in that same-sized check this year going home with them. This is about who is a better person to spend your money—you or the government. It is also about a debate about whether the government is better off with higher taxes or more taxpayers and, of course, it is better off with more taxpayers.

Chairman BRADY said that the other date is April 15, because that is the last time in the foreseeable future that families are going to have to deal with a Tax Code that they don't understand, that they believe to be unfair, that they believe does not treat everybody equitably in how that Tax Code is applied. Many of the special provisions are going to be out of the Tax Code. Next April 15, probably 9 out of 10 taxpayers would have filled out an income tax form on a card about this big and, for 9 out of 10 taxpayers, they are going to look at double the personal exemption from this year—that is \$24,000, if you are a married couple, that you just subtract immediately from your income—and double the child tax credit, up to \$2,000. Somebody said to me just yesterday: You mean my son with his three children is going to be able to take \$6,000 off of whatever their tax bill would be at the bottom of that form, and the answer is yes. If they didn't have a tax bill, at the bottom of that form that totals \$6,000, those families

get a credit that allows them to take money for other taxes they have paid and take that home with them.

So this is after a decade of historically low growth, a decade that defies virtually the entire history of the country going back to 1789, where 3 percent growth has been the normal growth. Less than 2 percent growth has been the normal growth for 9 of the last 10 years. The 1 year that is going to be an exception is this year. It looks like we are going to get close to and maybe even exceed 3 percent and get back to where the economy should be growing. I think with the new tax bill, we may exceed that and most of people's concerns about a lot of the things in this bill will go away when the economy starts growing again.

Buying power is almost 3 percent lower this year than it was in the 1990s. Now, their wages may have gone up between now and the 1990s, but prices have gone up more, and it is time to get our economy growing again and let families have more of the money they have earned to spend on their family. If you are a family of four earning about \$73,000 this year and \$73,000 next year, next year, your tax is going to be \$2,000 less than it is this year. If you are a single parent with one child earning \$41,000, next year your tax will be \$1,300 less than it is this year.

Now, some will say—as a matter of fact, I have heard it on the floor of the Senate—a few hundred dollars a month will not matter. Well, now that is clearly somebody who doesn't know how much a few hundred dollars a month or a few hundred dollars a year does matter.

This bill will give us ways to compete that we don't have now. The bill also will provide Missouri families and other families more jobs and more opportunities because we are going to be more competitive. We will have moved our corporate tax rate. It will not be the lowest in the world, but it will no longer be the highest in the world. It will be in the very middle. Twenty-one percent is right in the middle of the countries we compete with. At the time that 35 percent was our rate in 1986, it was the middle, too, but every other country that we compete with has figured out that that gives you a competitive disadvantage, and they have all lowered their taxes as our corporate tax stayed the same. We are restoring our competitive position. We are hoping and actually going to go ahead and tax the money that is trapped overseas, whether it comes back or not. So I think it is safe to assume that somewhere in the neighborhood of \$2 trillion will come back into our economy.

There is more U.S. money overseas that would like to come home—but wasn't going to come home if we took 35 percent out of it—than at any time before. There is more U.S. capital in this country on the sidelines than at any time before. You put that money into the economy, and you put that 2

trillion or so dollars into the economy. You make us the best, safest, and most predictable place in the world to invest money. Foreign investment in our economy—not in their economy but in our economy—will increase, and it is time for that to happen.

This Tax Code will increase take-home pay immediately, and it will make us more competitive, and we will have jobs that pay more in the future.

The rolling back of redtape is one of the reasons that the economy in our country is already growing faster than it has in a decade. People saw the regulatory overreach. Most importantly, President Trump saw the regulatory overreach. The House and the Senate saw the regulatory overreach. We were able to block 15 regulations before they went into effect. Other regulations, like the totally ridiculous power rule that was proposed, which in my State would have doubled the utility bill in less than 12 years, is not going to happen now. The waters of the United States, which would have suddenly put the EPA in charge of anything involving water, is not going to happen now. The \$52 million increase in just the cost of getting something where you could start, which was the anticipated cost of the waters of the United States, is not going to happen now.

Chairman ISAKSON of the Veterans' Affairs Committee was on the floor earlier, talking about what we have done with his leadership for veterans, and that list is long. The Veterans Choice Act continues to give veterans more opportunity to get the care where they want it rather than to be stuck in a system that didn't seem to always care that much whether veterans got care or not. It was more about the Veterans' Administration than the veterans, and competition and choice is in the process of ending that with good leadership at the VA administration and being sure that happens.

We were able to pass a bill that I sponsored, the HIRE Vets Act. It is being implemented right now to recognize companies that hire vets, that promote vets, and that give vets credit for the skills they learned in the military. The Department of Labor has worked hard to put that on fast-forward and get it done.

In the military, the Military Family Stability Act means that families, for the first time, have the opportunity that they have always hoped to have for the family to move a little earlier or stay a little longer, if that works for education purposes or the spouse's education or career purposes. This is a dramatic step, appreciating the fact that the strength of the military is in military families. We recruit, generally in the military, single adults, and we retire from the military adults with spouses and children, and this looks at that.

There is a lot to talk about as we end this session. It is never perfect, but that is why we come back for the next session. There are going to be things

that could have been done better, but so many things have happened that haven't happened in a generation. I know that I am eager to go home and talk about those, as I was on the radio this morning and yesterday morning doing that already. I know that my colleagues are too.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I wish to thank my colleague from Missouri for highlighting a lot of the good work of this past year in the Senate and touching on some highlights, particularly in the veterans area, that have great impact across the country. It is something on which we all joined together compassionately, wanting to help our veterans and wanting to make sure they get the best care in the best way as quickly as possible, and I appreciate his highlighting that.

I wish to highlight the positive change that this Republican majority has brought to the American people in the first year of President Trump's administration. I am going to talk about a few different things than my colleague from Missouri, and I think you would expect that. I come from the State of West Virginia. Certain policies impact us differently, and so that is what having the time to talk about our accomplishments over the past year gives us the ability to do.

I can't begin without talking about one of the biggest and boldest actions that we have taken this week, and that is our pro-growth tax reform bill. Throughout the process, I traveled across the State and heard from many constituents—friends and many strangers—all about this effort. Not only at the beginning did they realize what a difference this will make in their lives, but, as my colleague from Missouri said, as we move through this year, when you start to see your paychecks change and you bring home more of your own money because your rate went down or when you begin to file in April, realizing that this is the last time you have to file this complicated thing—I am going to be able to make it easier on myself—families, workers, and small businesses across our State are really counting on relief, and this week we delivered on that.

In West Virginia, particularly when asked "How is this really going to help the bulk of the people in the middle-wage earning families?" I like to highlight the fact that in my State in particular, 83 percent of our tax filers don't take itemizations. They file with the standard deduction. That has now been doubled.

The child tax credit has been doubled, as the gentleman from Wyoming said. It gives that child tax credit, and that goes right to the heart of the middle-wage earning family trying to make ends meet at the end of the day.

They are predictions, but we feel certain that with the doubling of these deductions and this credit, more people

will file on the smaller form and also push that number to maybe over 90 percent.

This year, we also delivered on significant regulatory reforms, especially in the energy realm, which is absolutely impactful in my area of the country. Under the Congressional Review Act, the Senate has repealed 14 of President Obama's very onerous regulations.

I led the effort to enact a CRA to fix the burdensome stream protection rule. This rule really threatened what was left of the coal industry in our region. The Obama-era rule would have prohibited many forms of coal mining in Appalachia. I kept saying: Let's balance this.

Under Scott Pruitt's leadership, the EPA repealed the Clean Power Plan—another onerous regulation with minimal benefit. We can do it better, and I believe, in this EPA, we will.

For years, I asked the Obama administration—Madam President, we serve on the same committee—I asked the EPA to come to my State and see what the impacts are of the rules and the regulations that they are putting forward. They never came. This year, the EPA finally answered my calls and came to the State of West Virginia—the State capital, Charleston, WV—to listen to both sides of those who will be impacted by any regulations that the EPA puts forward.

We also reformed the waters of the United States—or WOTUS—rule, which has severe impacts not only in the mining community but particularly in the agriculture community and other industries in and around the country.

Many parts of West Virginia continue to feel the impact of the devastating floods that we suffered a year ago June. So with my service on the Appropriations Committee, I worked diligently with others to ensure that our community needs are met.

That is the great thing about this country. I know Texas certainly and Florida, Puerto Rico, and other areas are weaving through these devastating weather-related and natural disasters. With all the sadness that is occurring and all the destruction that we see, the one thing we appreciate as Americans is our ability to come together and help one another. The first person I met when I was going to see the floods had traveled 51½ hours with their church to come and help those who had been flooded out of their homes. On the Appropriations Committee, we were able to get more funding for damage to roads and other property and individuals so that West Virginians could get back to work and provide for their families.

I also focused my efforts on ensuring that our State had the resources it needs to fight back against the continued devastation wrought by the drug epidemic.

Just yesterday or today, the CDC came out with a report that had lines on a graph that showed the different

age groups and the number of deaths that occurred because of opioids, and every line was going up.

The State of West Virginia has been particularly hard hit with this. We have the highest rate of opioid drug overdose deaths per 100,000 of any State in the Union.

I worked with the new CMS to try to help secure a Medicaid waiver that would allow West Virginians to expand substance abuse treatment and also services for Medicaid members and expand the ability for treatment to be offered to folks who have Medicaid. I partnered with officials from the Office of National Drug Control Policy to hear directly from West Virginians at a roundtable. The Chief of Staff of the White House office also participated in roundtables at the White House.

In honor of West Virginian Jessie Grubb, Senator MANCHIN and I saw the passage of Jessie's Law. This law bolsters our fight by requiring HHS to develop standards for hospitals and health professionals on a patient's history with addiction. Jessie Grubb admitted she was addicted when she was in the hospital. She wasn't in the hospital for addiction issues; she admitted she had an addiction problem. She left with opioids. She didn't live another 24 hours. In her honor, Senator MANCHIN and I have worked hard to see that this doesn't happen to another family.

As West Virginia continues to be ground zero for this epidemic, I won't stop my work for those who are suffering, including looking at innovative solutions like those we have at Lily's Place in Huntington for the babies who are born drug-exposed—again, innocent victims of those rising lines I saw in the charts the CDC put forward.

We have been working with law enforcement to ensure that they have the tools they need to administer emergency assistance, such as naloxone, to those who may be overdosing, or build on telehealth projects, demonstration projects that can help with substance abuse treatment.

I have always said that we need a spectrum of solutions. As we look back, we have done a lot. As we look forward, we have to do more because the problem is getting worse.

I think we also have had tremendous success and impact in our quest to connect West Virginia. I created a program called Capito Connect that would move high-speed internet connectivity into the rural parts of our country, in places like West Virginia that are underserved. Through Capito Connect and my GO Act, we have seen accelerated broadband access in West Virginia certainly but also in rural America. I was able to work with the USDA to get our local communities a consortium to secure a USDA loan to be able to move broadband to 9,000 more West Virginians.

So working with other agencies, EDA and others, on not just moving on broadband but economic development projects, we have seen impacts in 45 of

the 55 counties that I represent but also being able to create an associated 1,400 jobs.

Federal grants like these help not only our communities but our universities, such as Marshall and West Virginia Universities, which provide great benefits to our communities.

These are tangible achievements over the last year—both more global, such as the tax reform, and more local, as in broadband deployment.

The Senate also plays an important role by giving advice and consent on President Trump's nominations and confirming them. This year, Republicans made significant progress in shaping the judiciary, most certainly starting with the confirmation of our Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch. His strong record and straightforward approach are just what we expect from a Supreme Court Justice. I was proud to vote for his confirmation this year. We have also confirmed 12 circuit judges—the highest number during a President's first year since 1891.

I am pleased to say that as of yesterday, we had confirmed both of our U.S. attorneys in the State of West Virginia. I am very grateful for that because this fight against opioids has to have the U.S. attorney's help. It has to have the U.S. attorney aggression—not just with law enforcement but also helping with treatment.

So this year, I am proud that we addressed a lot of America's concerns. We have tackled challenges head-on and delivered real results. I am proud that President Trump and his administration are listening to the needs of small States like mine, West Virginia, and working with me to deliver that relief.

It has been an honor for me to host some Cabinet members in the State of West Virginia—I didn't see that over the last 8 years—Secretary Perry, Secretary of Energy; Secretary Mnuchin, Secretary of Treasury; and also the Secretary of Labor. We went on a coal mine tour with Secretary Acosta. This helps them see the kinds of ups and downs of life in rural and central United States—in Appalachia in particular.

We have a lot we have to do. We have a lot on our plate. I think it is always this time of year that, in my personal life, I like to look back at some of the great things that we have accomplished as a family or for those whom I love or some of the things that happened to us that maybe haven't been quite as good as we would have hoped. I also take this time to be a grateful person, to be a grateful American, to be a grateful West Virginian because we are so blessed with where we live and how we live and the bounty of our friendships. But I also take the time to look forward to what we are going to be able to do. So when I see tax reform kicking in next year, in 2018, that is what I am going to be looking forward to for so many hard-working West Virginians, so many hard-working small business owners, and so many people

who have been waiting for years—decades, in some cases—for the kind of reform that we put forward.

With that, I would like to yield back my time, but first I would just like to say that I am grateful to be serving with the three Members who are in here with me today. I wish everybody here and everybody listening in this country a very wonderful holiday season.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, let me make a comment to the Senator from West Virginia. One of the problems we have right now is that during the last administration, there was a war on fossil fuel—which includes coal and nuclear also—and some of the damage has already been done. Unfortunately, we can't come in with a ready fix now and assume—because a lot of the generators out there had done field switching out of coal, so you can't switch it back. So I will say it was help coming not quite on time, but nonetheless it is here now.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY AND VETERANS HEALTHCARE

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, let me mention something that is very significant to me personally. I remember it was 2 years ago today that I picked up USA TODAY, and in a USA TODAY article, they singled out my State of Oklahoma and said that we are not treating our veterans right. We were in shock at that time. In fact, the article detailed some really appalling things that were going on and were not going on in my State of Oklahoma. There were things the inspector general reported during the Obama administration that we had no way of knowing about.

We seem to have more veterans per capita in Oklahoma. One of the reasons is we have five major military establishments, and Oklahoma is a great place to live, so a lot of them retire there. They were not getting the help they need, and they were not getting the treatment to the highest standards that were available.

This isn't how we take care of veterans in Oklahoma. Senator LANKFORD and I and two of the House Members worked on this and talked to regional Veterans' Administration leadership. We talked to the veterans. We talked to whistleblowers. And we identified three key problems that we needed to fix. This is interesting because these are three problems in my State of Oklahoma, but they would be the same thing in Nebraska or any other State because it is not just in our State of Oklahoma.

The first one was that the VA couldn't fire bad employees.

This is always a problem. You go into an organization and you find that things are not going very well because there are one or two bad employees.

Yet it takes you a year before you are able to get rid of these people. Despite having been identified, it takes forever to terminate an employee.

Well, we fixed that this past summer when President Trump signed the VA Accountability Act that included our language to allow the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to immediately fire employees for misconduct or poor performance. That was successful. We did it. That is history.

I have to say that during President Trump's administration so far, he has used this firing authority on over 500 bad actors from the VA, and we are finally creating a culture of accountability in the VA, which is having positive results. That is the first reform.

The second one: Too many veterans were forced to receive care from VA facilities that were hours away or didn't provide specialized care.

This is a problem. A lot of these veterans don't have the capability to move around and get the care they need, and they didn't have the choices. So we actually had to make a change, and we did. We worked with the President and reauthorized the bipartisan VA Choice Program.

The VA Choice Program is great because it allowed our veterans to actually, in those hard-to-reach areas, get high-quality healthcare, regardless of where they had to travel to get it done. That was a success.

Finally, after the USA TODAY article, we requested an accredited third-party look at the problem at our VA facilities because previous reports from the Obama Veterans Affairs inspector general failed to identify and correct these problems. Well, my request was denied. It is just like any bureaucracy. They don't want someone looking over their shoulder, so they said: No, we are not going to allow you to have a third party accompany the VA to look into the problem that you have.

Some are not aware of this, but in the Senate, when someone is nominated, we can put a hold on them and not allow them to go through confirmation—at least for a long period of time. At that time, the President—our current President—had nominated a person to be the inspector general of the Veterans' Administration. We put a hold on him until they allowed someone to come in and monitor the evaluation that the VA was doing of their own bureaucracy in Oklahoma. That worked, except the problem with that is it was a one-time authorization. We needed to make that a permanent part of our structure. I am pleased to say we did that.

When we signed the Enhancing Veteran Care Act, it permanently granted the VISN directors—that is one of the director levels of the VA—and gave the medical center directors the authority to request, at their request, an outside oversight in order to evaluate what they had done. It has been very successful.

It is important for the regional directors to have the authority because

they have the best idea of the reality of care at their facilities.

I appreciate the work of my colleagues, Senator JAMES LANKFORD, Congressman MARKWAYNE MULLIN, and Congressman STEVE RUSSELL. It turned out to be a real good team, and we are able to get these things done. We are already starting to see real progress in improving the veterans' care in Oklahoma and across the country because as we are improving the system we had in Oklahoma, that same system can be improved in Nebraska or any other State.

We need to get our VA facilities from their current ratings to the highest standard. The highest standard rating is five stars. We are now up to three stars in Oklahoma. We were at one star when we first discovered this problem on that fateful day 2 years ago today in an article in USA TODAY.

President Trump will continue to be an important partner for Oklahoma as we continue to improve our veterans' care.

SUPPORTING OUR MILITARY

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, President Trump's commitment to our veterans is only matched by his commitment to our servicemembers and our national security. You can't really segregate it out and say, well, we are going to take care of our veterans' activities and then still say we are not going to allow our country to have the national security they fought so hard for.

We saw that earlier this week when the President outlined his national security strategy, charting a new course for American foreign policy, leaving behind the failed policies of the Obama administration. With his national security strategy, President Trump has been clear that he is committed to protecting the homeland, promoting American prosperity, and advancing peace through strength. Have you ever heard that before, peace through strength? I am one of the few who is old enough around here who remember our great President we had who talked about peace through strength when he had to rebuild the military after the Carter administration. It was actually as bad—or as downgraded as our military has become from the last administration.

Now he is asserting America's leadership in the free world. We saw how under President Obama the military was forced to divert resources for priorities that weren't even about defending America. He used the military to advance his liberal agenda, which led to the wasteful spending on what they call the green Navy and the green bullets. The idea that climate change was the largest threat to our national security, all of that has changed and not a moment too soon.

President Trump is focused on what matters, rightfully taking out things like just worrying about climate

change as opposed to rebuilding our military, and he is building it at a very rapid rate right now.

We passed the bill, the Defense authorization bill, and we have made a great start on this.

Now, when the President came into office, our military was facing a readiness crisis, and Americans didn't really understand this. They didn't know. They had not been told this. We had a biased media that didn't allow this information to get out. As an example, our Air Force today, right now, is short 1,500 pilots, and 1,300 of those are actually fighter pilots. Only 50 percent of the Air Force squadrons are trained and ready to conduct all of their assigned missions. I have to repeat that. Only 50 percent of our Air Force squadrons are trained and ready to defend America.

The Navy is the smallest and least ready it has been in years. It currently can only meet 40 percent of the demand for regional combat. The commanders in the field include only enough personnel to man six and a half of our nine carrier air wing.

A carrier air wing is something a lot of people are not familiar with. A carrier air wing has approximately 75 combat aircraft. Currently, we have manned only 6½ wings and are 8,000 sailors short.

This is an air wing. They have F-18s, they have EA-18s, they have F-35s, they have C-2As. Again, just a little over half of ours are actually ready. Well, that is the problem we are faced with right now. More than half of the Navy's F-18s are grounded because they are awaiting maintenance or lack of necessary parts. If you look at our Marines, our Marines are using F-18s, and 62 percent of F-18s will not fly. People are just shocked when they find out about it. It is because we don't have the spare parts. Well, we are getting busy on that. We are going to make sure we correct those problems.

The Army has said that only about one-third of their brigade combat teams, one-fourth of their air aviation brigades, and one-half of their division headquarters are currently ready.

A brigade combat team consists of 7 battalions, approximately 4,500 students. I wish I had time to come up with a chart on this, but the carrier wing is one that is absolutely necessary to get folks straight, and we plan on doing that.

Faced with the most dangerous threats I have seen in my lifetime, these are critical gaps in our military we simply cannot accept.

I often say, when I look back at the good old days of the Cold War, where we had two superpowers—and the superpowers, we knew what they had, they knew what we had. It is totally different now.

You have a country like North Korea, which has demonstrated that they have the capacity now to reach an American city. We learned that on November 28, when they actually dem-

onstrated a range that would reach one of our continental U.S. cities.

They tried to give us a little bit of comfort in saying, well, we don't know that they would be able to carry a warhead. We don't think they would have the capacity to do that. Well, we don't know that. That is not much comfort.

When they say: We don't have the capacity to be accurate on a reentry because of what a missile has to go through on a reentry, well, that is not very comforting that this would happen.

Anyway, the NDAA—the bill we passed, that the President signed into law—would be a good step in correcting the readiness shortfalls. I look forward to continuing to work with him on this critical process.

We have a committee that already is having hearings about the problems we are having. We had one, actually, in the subcommittee hearing I chaired just this week. We are busy correcting these problems.

Meanwhile, back to our VA problems in Oklahoma, we put two new great directors in the VA clinics. We have a level of veterans' care Oklahomans are proud of. Only yesterday, President Trump signed the Enhancing Veteran Care Act to ensure that we continue to give our veterans the best care. They deserve it, and they are going to get it.

At the same time, we are going to restore and rebuild the military as our Nation's No. 1 priority. Our troops deserve it, and they are going to get it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from South Carolina.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. President.

This week, we took a major step toward helping the middle- and working-class family by passing the first significant tax reform package in a generation.

I wanted to take a few minutes to thank a lot of folks for their efforts, hard work, and dedication to this process. At the Member level, both Leader MCCONNELL and Chairman HATCH did amazing work leading us through this process.

I also had the privilege of working as part of the Core 4, with PAT TOOMEY, JOHN THUNE, and ROB PORTMAN, over the past year developing this bill. Those three guys are some of the hardest working Members we have.

I also thank MARCO RUBIO for his dedication to improving the child tax credit, as well as MIKE LEE and Ivanka Trump.

We were also able to include my Investing in Opportunity Act as a part of the legislation. This is legislation that will help distressed communities throughout the country. More than 50 million Americans today live in those distressed communities, and the Investing in Opportunity Act can usher

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

the appointment of that special counsel. Now a campaign of mistruth and misdirection has been launched against that special counsel investigation. It is a campaign that is calculated, concerted, and coordinated. It is calculated because it is planned and premeditated; it is concerted in its consistency and vehemence; and it is coordinated among officials within the government, including the U.S. Congress and commentators and individuals outside the government.

The danger of a constitutional crisis is real and urgent, and we must come together in the U.S. Senate to face it and address it and deal with it.

This body has come together in the past when America has faced a foreign adversary that has sought to do our Nation harm. We have come together to hold our leaders accountable when they have broken faith with the American people. We have come together when forces of dissension and misdirection have sought to undermine or weaken respect for the law and law enforcement and, indeed, the rule of law. What is at stake here is nothing less than the rule of law.

Let's recognize what is happening. The President, in effect, is going down two tracks. On the one hand, he is saying that he has no present intention to fire the special counsel or to pardon anyone—yet. He adds that word very distinctly. The other track involves a coordinated, concerted, and calculated campaign that is continuing—indeed, rising—in intensity and volume.

The President's supporters, even in raising that volume, have reached extraordinary lows. Let's remember. At first, our Republican colleagues appeared to recognize that Robert Mueller was eminently—indeed, uniquely—qualified for his important task. Republican House Members called him a “man of the utmost integrity” and “someone we all trust.” Now we hear that the Mueller investigation is somehow biased. One commentator known to be close to President Trump suggested that the special counsel should not only be fired, he should be arrested. Even Members of Congress who once recognized Mr. Mueller's stellar record as a member of the Armed Forces, as well as in his capacity as the FBI Director, as a prosecutor, and as a public servant, have impugned his integrity. Indeed, they have begun to sow seeds of doubt.

A chorus of defenders and sycophants has launched this campaign—calculated, concerted, and coordinated—to smear the special counsel, to impugn the integrity of the FBI—to, indeed, directly attack this great and important institution. They have decided to do it in that concerted and coordinated and calculated way. The President, himself, has said that the FBI's reputation is in tatters.

An article that appeared today in *POLITICO* described an effort by a House Republican on the Intelligence Committee to initiate a sustained at-

tack on the Department of Justice and the FBI. The President's chorus of defenders and sycophants describes routine law enforcement activities as a “coup” and traffics in the kinds of conspiracy theories that we usually associate with fringe internet chat rooms.

What is their justification for this vituperative attack on the Department of Justice and the FBI?

One of the FBI agents expressed his political views in a private text to an FBI attorney, but the special counsel took swift and decisive and deliberate action to remove that FBI agent from the investigation.

More broadly, let's recognize the reality here. As a Federal prosecutor, as the U.S. attorney for Connecticut for 4½ years, and then as the State attorney general for 20 years, I know—and all of us who have been prosecutors know—that investigators, like FBI agents, have political views. Some are on the right end of the political spectrum; some are on the left. The mark of their professionalism is that they leave them at home when they go to work. They park them at the door, not just because it is what they are taught and trained to do, but they believe in unbiased law enforcement because they know that a criminal investigation, ultimately, comes down to facts and law. It cannot be based on political opinions. Investigations that are biased by political opinions are doomed to disaster.

Perhaps most importantly, there is not a scintilla of fact—not a shred of evidence—that the special counsel investigation has been impacted in any way by any political view of any FBI agent or, for that matter, anyone else in that investigation. There is, simply, no evidence that political views have impacted the special counsel's investigation.

The simple fact that prosecutors know is that all such investigations must seek to uncover the facts and apply the law, and that is what Special Counsel Robert Mueller has done. The proof is in the results so far—two powerful convictions that have shattered the Trump Presidency and two indictments that indicate this investigation is just at its beginning, not at the beginning of the end but, simply, the end of the beginning. These trials of the two indictments will go well into next year, as will the investigation. That there will be more convictions and more indictments, I think, can be pretty reliably predicted to a near certainty.

Beyond this investigation, we all know in this Chamber—and, certainly, any of us who have been involved in law enforcement—that public trust and confidence are essential. The President, himself, has said he is “a true friend and loyal champion” for law enforcement and “more loyal than anyone else can be.” He has pointed out that law enforcement officials, like our police and FBI agents and DEA and others, “rush into danger every day,”

and he has criticized the folks who have subjected them to “relentless criticism.” He has promised to always stand with them. Those promises apply, apparently, to law enforcement as long as they are not investigating him.

The President has said that he has no present intention to fire the special counsel, but he has far from ruled it out. For anyone who thinks it would be too outside the bounds of normal standards, remember that the firing of Jim Comey as FBI Director was regarded as unthinkable. It was unthinkable until President Trump did it.

Equally important, this chorus of defenders and sycophants can undermine the Mueller investigation even if Mueller, himself, is never fired. They can poison the well of public opinion and, indeed, a jury pool. They can sow seeds of doubt regarding the special counsel and his team, and they can lay the groundwork for firing Robert Mueller as well as for issuing pardons.

Let no one have any doubt. Firing Robert Mueller would create a firestorm that would be every bit as vehement as the Saturday Night Massacre. It would provoke an uprising, an outcry, and outrage in the American people and in this Chamber. The time to make that fact clear is now, not just for this side of the aisle but with unanimity and force on both sides.

That chorus of defenders and sycophants may think or imagine it can prevent the special counsel from revealing his finding or reporting to the American people at the conclusion of his investigation or that it can discredit or demean those findings or that it can undermine his credibility before a jury. It would be wrong because this body and our colleagues are committed to uncovering the truth, to pursuing it wherever it leads, and to enforcing the law.

That is my hope and belief, but it must not only be a hope; it must be reflected in action—in real action. That involves passing legislation that will send a message about this body's resolute and unwavering commitment to making sure that the special counsel cannot be fired, that pardons cannot be issued, and that this investigation cannot be a victim of political interference.

The President has indicated that he is averse to hearing about Russia or considering its threat to this country. That aversion certainly sets back his ability to defend this country against the Russian threat by sanctions and other means and deterrents that will assure that Russia is made to pay a price so they do not do it again.

In conclusion, let me just say that that aversion must be overcome. We need to send a signal, as we did by passing sanctions, that we will take action against Russia to stop it from interfering again in this election, that we will make sure that Russia is made to pay a price, and that our constituents know that we will insist on a fair

and independent investigation without political interference, passing legislation that is bipartisan that has been offered by Republicans as well as Democrats, including myself, and should be moved through the Judiciary Committee and to the floor of this Congress. That message is all the more important now as this investigation penetrates the White House for the first time in the Flynn conviction, coming closer to the Oval Office itself. A real and robust congressional investigation of those efforts through the Judiciary Committee, as well as obstruction of justice, continues to be necessary, but we should combine our efforts to make sure that law enforcement and the judicial process moves forward without political interference that will undermine its credibility.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CAPITO). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, I yield the floor to Senators JOHNSON and MARKEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I wish to thank my colleagues Senator WARNER and Senator BLUMENTHAL for their words on the Senate floor—Senator WARNER's words yesterday especially, defending Special Counsel Robert Mueller, in his leadership on the Senate Intelligence Committee's Russia investigation. Senator WARNER is absolutely right that we must protect the integrity of the Justice Department's independent investigation.

Congress needs to make clear that there are redlines. Any attempt to fire Robert Mueller, to shut down the investigation, or to presumptively pardon key witnesses essential to the investigation would be an abuse of power and a direct threat to the rule of law and to our constitutional system.

Ohio's Ukrainian community knows the impact of unchecked Russian aggression in Russia's effort to undermine democracy around the world. Getting to the bottom of Russian interference and protecting our future elections from that interference are critical.

My priority is getting to the bottom of what happened so that our democratic process is upheld and so we can move forward with the business we were sent here to do—creating jobs, combatting the opioid crisis, as Senators JOHNSON, MARKEY, and I will speak about in a moment, and helping middle-class families. Any efforts to delay that conclusion or interfere in the investigation, I believe, will not be tolerated by Senators in either party.

Thanks to Senator WARNER for making that clear. Thanks to my colleagues in both parties who take this seriously. All of us have had serious conversations with Members of both parties to discuss what all this means, and thank you for all of us working to-

gether to complete the independent Senate investigation. It is important that we make clear to the American people that this is not a partisan issue. It is about the integrity of our elections, about protecting our country from foreign powers.

Any attempt to discredit Robert Mueller and his investigation and to turn it into a partisan issue makes us less safe as a nation. Let's allow the Justice Department and the special counsel to do their jobs. Let's get back to doing ours.

INTERDICT ACT

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, as we await Senator MARKEY's and Senator JOHNSON's remarks, I wish to set the stage. The CDC released a new report last night showing a massive increase in the number of Americans dying from drug overdoses.

My State is second to the Presiding Officer's State. It has the second highest rate of deaths per capita in the country. In my State of Ohio, unfortunately, far too many people die from opioid overdoses than any other State in country. Families are torn apart. Children lose parents. Parents lose sons and daughters.

The CDC pins much of the blame of this epidemic on this relatively new deadly synthetic fentanyl. Fentanyl is 50 times stronger than heroin. Senator CAPITO knows that, as do Senators Johnson and Markey. All of us in the Senate are aware of that.

This drug is being illegally trafficked into this country from Mexico and China. We have a bill to stop this today. The INTERDICT Act. I want to thank Senator MARKEY for his leadership on this bill and also my colleague Senator PORTMAN for his support. Senator PORTMAN and I have been working on a number of issues across party lines for months and months. It would provide more funds for Customs and Border Protection to screen packages effectively and safely, to stop fentanyl whenever possible before it reaches Akron, Toledo, Dayton, or the smaller cities of Chillicothe, Mansfield, and Zanesville.

This passed the House with only two or three negative votes. It has the support of major law enforcement organizations, including sheriffs and police officers. Our law enforcement officials, better than anybody, see the devastation that fentanyl causes our communities. They know the risk our officers face dealing with this deadly substance. That is why this bill needs to pass into law.

Just this week, the National FOP, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the Police Assisted Addiction Recovery Initiative—a recent phenomenon, unfortunately—all publicly asked us to pass the bill.

Americans are dying in record numbers. Life expectancy in our country—I believe, for the first time in the lifetimes of any of us—actually dropped last year. Think about that.

We have made progress, as I mentioned, in this body. I wear a pin on my lapel of a canary in a bird cage. The mine workers in West Virginia, Ohio, and elsewhere would take this canary down to the mines. If the canary died, the mine worker was on his own. He didn't have a union strong enough or a government that cared enough to help him. In those days, people lived 45 years on average—for a person born in the United States in 1900.

Today we live 30 years longer for a whole host of public health reasons—from Medicare to Medicaid, to safe drinking laws, to clean air, to minimum wage—all the things that we do. For the first time, I believe, in our lifetime, life expectancy actually has dropped because of drug overdoses for the second year in a row, and it is in large part because of these overdose deaths.

Why shouldn't we take steps today to stop this? We can do this by putting the INTERDICT Act on the President's desk, immediately giving law enforcement the tools they need to keep fentanyl out of the country and off our streets.

Mr. MARKEY. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BROWN. Of course.

Mr. MARKEY. I thank the Senator for yielding, and I thank the Senator from Ohio for talking about this very important issue.

Fentanyl is a killer that is descending upon every single community in the United States. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times more powerful than morphine. Fentanyl is the Godzilla of opioids.

Senator BROWN represents Ohio; I represent Massachusetts. The fentanyl epidemic has a bull's-eye on Ohio and a bull's-eye on Massachusetts. The deaths from fentanyl are skyrocketing. In 2016, upwards of 70 to 75 percent of all of the opioid deaths in Massachusetts were because of fentanyl. Fentanyl was found in the blood system of those people who died. Last year, 2,000 people in Massachusetts died of overdoses. Three-quarters of them had fentanyl. If the epidemic had been hitting the rest of the country at the same rate that it has been hitting Massachusetts, last year 75,000 people would have died with fentanyl in their blood systems.

Last night, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released shocking new numbers on drug overdose deaths in the United States. These numbers show the spike in deaths caused by fentanyl and other synthetic opioids.

Here are the new numbers nationwide. More than 42,000 Americans died from an opioid overdose last year. That is a 27-percent increase over the number of Americans who died from an opioid overdose in 2015. It went up 27 percent from 2015 to 2016. Of the 42,000 lives lost to opioids last year, nearly half of them nationwide—just over

19,000—can be directly attributed to fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. The number is a much higher percentage in Massachusetts.

Fentanyl is overrunning our communities, laying waste to them. There is no easy solution, but we know that we must staunch the flow of this drug before we lose an entire generation to this terrible killer. That is why I introduced legislation with Senator BROWN and Senator RUBIO to help those on the frontlines stop this deadly drug from ever getting into our communities. The bill is called the INTERDICT Act. It provides badly needed high-tech equipment and other scientific resources to U.S. Customs and Border Protection to catch illicit fentanyl being trafficked into the United States, mainly from China and Mexico.

When U.S. Customs and Border Protection detects a suspicious package or substance, it has had very good success identifying an illicit drug like fentanyl with the help of high-tech, hand-held chemical screening devices. Using these devices, Customs and Border Protection agents can detect, identify, and seize illicit drugs like fentanyl on the spot. Those rapid results provide vital information for border agents to continue their investigation and, if appropriate, proceed with seizure and arrest.

What is more, these devices and their ability to immediately identify fentanyl and other hazardous illicit substances also serve to safeguard the health and well-being of Customs and Border Protection agents so they are not accidentally exposed to fentanyl. That is what these devices help to make possible.

So we introduced the INTERDICT Act with SHERROD BROWN of Ohio; Senator CAPITO, the Presiding Officer in the Senate today; Senator RUBIO; and we have added another 16 Senators from both sides of the aisle.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I would be glad to yield.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I thank Senator MARKEY for his leadership on this issue. This has gotten this far because of his efforts in so many ways.

I want to enter into the RECORD three letters that are dated yesterday and today. Actually, one is from the National Fraternal Order of Police, signed by Chuck Canterbury, their national president, in support of this bill, with a very persuasive, passionate laying out of reasons it matters. The second is a letter from the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, signed by Dominick Stokes. Mr. Stokes is a longtime friend of mine. The third letter is from the Police Assisted Addiction Recovery Initiative group, signed by Frederick Ryan, all making endorsements for this bill.

I ask unanimous consent those three letters be printed in the RECORD.

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

NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE,

Washington, DC, December 20, 2017.

Hon. A. MITCHELL MCCONNELL, JR.,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. CHARLES E. SCHUMER,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS MCCONNELL AND SCHUMER: I am writing on behalf of the members of the Fraternal Order of Police to urge the Senate to consider H.R. 2142, the "International Narcotics Trafficking Emergency Response by Detecting Incoming Contraband with Technology (INTERDICT) Act," which passed the House 412-3 in October.

Heroin and prescription opiates have created a devastating epidemic across our country, and now these overdoses outnumber gunshot deaths and motor vehicle deaths. This epidemic has worsened with the influx of synthetic opiates like fentanyl from foreign countries, especially China and Mexico. For example, synthetic fentanyl is cheaper than normal opiates bought on the street and it is 50 times more deadly than heroin.

Our law enforcement officers at the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are on the forefront of stopping the deadly influx of synthetic fentanyl into our communities from these foreign countries. The CBP needs all the resources they can get to stop this devastating flow of drugs into our country.

This legislation will ensure that CBP will have additional portable chemical screening devices at ports of entry, mail and express consignment facilities, and more fixed chemical screening devices at CBP laboratories. The bill will also provide CBP with sufficient resources, personnel, and facilities, including scientists to interpret the screening test results from the field.

With all the additional resources CBP will be better equipped on all fronts to thwart the deadly flow of synthetic opiates across our borders.

On behalf of the more than 330,000 members of the Fraternal Order of Police, I want to thank you for helping fight against the heroin and opioid epidemic and fighting every day to rid our communities of these drugs. If I can be of any additional help to you, please feel free to contact me or my Senior Advisor, Jim Pasco, in my Washington office.

Sincerely,

CHUCK CANTERBURY,
National President.

FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

OFFICERS ASSOCIATION,

Cabin John, MD, December 21, 2017.

Hon. A. MITCHELL MCCONNELL, JR.,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. CHARLES E. SCHUMER,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS MCCONNELL AND SCHUMER: I am writing on behalf of the members of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA) which is a professional organization representing more than 26,000 federal officers and agents in 65 law enforcement agencies including the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP). FLEOA has endorsed H.R. 2142, the "International Narcotics Trafficking Emergency Response by Detecting Incoming Contraband and Technology (INTERDICT) Act" which passed the House with a 412-3 vote. I urge the Senate to consider this bill for passage.

Probably the most serious crisis facing law enforcement is the proliferation of heroin and opiate drugs, which are causing more deaths from overdoses than ever experienced before. In fact, synthetic opiates like fentanyl are now the leading cause of overdoses because they are cheaper and dramatically stronger than heroin.

The INTERDICT Act will provide CBP with portable screening devices at ports of entry

and mail facilities. In addition, it will increase detection devices at CBP testing facilities and laboratories. The Act will also provide CBP with additional staffing and resources. This will allow CBP to successfully diminish the importation of synthetic opiates into the United States.

FLEOA applauds your assistance in helping CBP and the other federal agencies in their efforts to reduce the plague these illegal substances have induced on our country.

Sincerely,

DOMINICK STOKES,
FLEOA V.P. for Legislation.

POLICE ASSISTED

ADDICTION RECOVERY INITIATIVE,

Gloucester, MA, December 21, 2017.

Hon. A. MITCHELL MCCONNELL, JR.,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. CHARLES E. SCHUMER,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS MCCONNELL AND SCHUMER: The Police Assisted Addiction Recovery Initiative (PAARI) is a nonprofit organization that trains and supports more than 360 law enforcement agencies that have launched programs that serve as a pre-arrest bridge to treatment. PAARI was pleased to offer its strong support for S. 708, the bipartisan INTERDICT Act, which was introduced by Senators Markey, Rubio, Brown, and Capito. This bill will expand U.S. Customs and Border Protection's ability to use technology to detect fentanyl and other narcotics coming into the United States from abroad and which are causing a public health epidemic in our communities.

While the Senate has yet to act on S. 708, the House of Representatives took action and on 25 October 2017, passed companion legislation HR 2142, by a vote of 412-3. As this year draws to a close, we urge the Senate to take up and pass the House version of INTERDICT this year.

Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, with more than 54,000 overdose deaths reported in 2015. Almost 33,000 of those overdose deaths—roughly 60 percent—involved opioids, including prescription opioid pain relievers, heroin, or the synthetic opioid fentanyl. In particular, as the CDC's recent report has just shown, fentanyl and its analogs are becoming increasingly responsible for these overdose deaths.

Fentanyl is up to 50 times more powerful than heroin and 100 times more powerful than morphine. It is dangerous and potentially life-threatening to simply touch or accidentally inhale the white powdery substance. Sometimes, unbeknownst to the user, fentanyl is often mixed with heroin or other substances, or formed to resemble prescription opioid pills. Most illicit fentanyl comes to the United States from China and Mexico, delivered through the mail or express consignment carriers, or smuggled across the southwest border of the United States. The INTERDICT Act will help the United States better identify and stop these dangerous substances from landing in communities across America.

Now is the time to act. This holiday season too many seats at too many tables are empty due to the unrelenting flow of fentanyl into the United States. We must give our law enforcement personnel the tools necessary to stop this flow. We can do that, in part, by getting the INTERDICT Act to the President's desk this year. That is why PAARI strongly supports this important legislation which will give U.S. Customs and Border Protection the additional resources it needs to fight the flow of fentanyl and other deadly drugs into the United States.

Sincerely,

FREDERICK RYAN,

*Chief of Police, Arlington
Massachusetts,*

*PAARI Board of Directors Co-Chairman,
PAARI National Police Council Chairman.*

Mr. BROWN. I think it is pretty clear how important this is. This bill got, I believe, 2 or maybe 3 negative votes out of 400-some in the House of Representatives. There is no organization I know of that opposes it. I hear from people in my State consistently about how important this is, from police organizations to parents, to individual police officers and county sheriffs and all, and deputy sheriffs.

There is just no reason we shouldn't be able to do this before we go home for Christmas. There are a lot of things we should do before we go home for Christmas, including the Children's Health Insurance Program, but this is one we know we can do. There seems to be no substantive disagreement from any large number of groups or individuals that I can see, so I am hopeful we can move forward with this in the next few minutes.

Mr. MARKEY. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BROWN. Yes.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I thank the Senator for yielding.

Can I just list the names of the organizations that support this bill so the police can interdict, stop the fentanyl from coming into our country?

It is the National Fraternal Order of Police, it is the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, it is the National Border Control Council, it is the Police Assisted Recovery Initiative, it is the National Sheriffs' Association, the National Tactical Officers Association, the National Association of Police Organizations, the National Narcotics Officers' Associations' Coalition, the Sergeants Benevolent Association, the American Legion, the International Union of Police Associations, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Major County Sheriffs of America, and the Massachusetts Coalition of Police. So it is pretty much every single law enforcement agency at all levels in the country saying: Please give us this tool now so we can detect this incredible killer in our country.

Three former Commissioners of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, appointed by both Democratic and Republican Presidents, support the INTERDICTION Act. President Trump's nominee to head the agency, Kevin McAleenan, testified that he supports getting more of these high-tech scanners into the hands of Customs and Border Patrol.

Despite working for months with Senate leadership to try and secure authorization for funding, we just can't seem to get this over the finish line so that in the new year they have these devices. The way it works is, you just put the device up next to a package, and it will tell you if it has got fentanyl or not. Right now, many law enforcement agencies will not even allow one of their police dogs to sniff

for fentanyl because it will kill the police dog. That is how dangerous fentanyl is, and that is why these electronic devices are so important. It ensures that we have minimized the exposure of our officers to these substances and, at the same time, dramatically increase the likelihood that we are going to identify the fentanyl in a package and, as a result, deter these people from China or from Mexico who bring it into our country and are killing us by the thousands.

At 42,000 deaths last year, it is now approximating the total number of deaths in the war in Vietnam throughout its entire history. That is just 1 year, 42,000 people—1 year. That is a terrorist attack of a magnitude on our own streets that is unimaginable.

With these devices, we don't completely solve the problem, but we put more weapons in the hands of our law enforcement officials, detection devices that can minimize the likelihood that these terrible people from China, from Mexico, principally, can bring this stuff into our country.

So this is a huge issue. It goes right to the heart of the seriousness of dealing with this issue. My only hope is, we have an ability to be able to move this thing forward in a way that lets the American people say: We understand the issues you want us to work on, and the opioid crisis is at the top of the list. It is indiscriminate. It affects potentially every family. No one is immune to addiction. No family is immune from addiction. It could hit any family at any time, and fentanyl is the ultimate killer.

I thank the Senator.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I thank Senator MARKEY and hope we can work things out with Senator JOHNSON on this issue.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. BROWN. Yesterday, Madam President, a bunch of Members of Congress, with healthcare paid for by taxpayers, went to the White House and celebrated a handout for corporations that sends jobs overseas—companies that shut down in Mansfield, in Zanesville, in Lima, and Toledo moved to Wuhan and Sheshan and Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Families here in America, at the same time—I am still incredulous about this. Families in this country, at the same time—in this State of Virginia, just a few miles from here—are getting letters in the mail saying their kids are about to be kicked off their health insurance through something that was bipartisan and never interrupted for 20 years since Chairman HATCH and Senator Rockefeller and Senator KENNEDY wrote this bill to create CHIP—and a number of us worked on it in the House of Representatives—because Congress hasn't done its job.

Think about that. Because Congress hasn't done its job, we are about to go

home for Christmas—most of us—and those who don't celebrate Christmas are about to go home for the holidays and celebrate the new year. My grandchildren are coming from Columbus, and another one is coming from the Virgin Islands with his father—our son and his daughter-in-law. We are going to go home, and our families have health insurance, but Members of Congress who get good health insurance paid for by taxpayers are willing to leave here and not reauthorize, not continue the Children's Health Insurance Program. To make it worse, several States, including Virginia—Ohio is in a little better position because there is a little more money left over to take care of this—but letters are going out in State after State after State to parents saying: Sorry, the health insurance for your children is going to expire. The health insurance for your children will no longer be there.

Imagine you are a parent, and you get this letter. You are just vaguely aware that Congress is fighting about something. You are vaguely aware of the hard-heartedness of a whole lot of people in this Congress. You are vaguely aware that a bunch of politicians—privileged, elected officials who make good salaries and make good benefits—are going to turn their backs on you. You don't really think much about that. All you know is, you take this piece of paper, tear open this envelope, and you start reading this letter, and you see, oh, my gosh, the insurance for my children.

Now, overwhelmingly, these parents are people who are working. They are earning \$8, \$10, \$12, \$15 an hour. They are not making enough that they can afford insurance for their families. They are not working at a job where insurance is provided as part of the compensation your employer is paying you. So that is why the Children's Health Insurance Program is so important.

A new report from the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families reports that 1.9 million children could lose coverage in January—1.9 million children. Almost all of them have a mother or a father who will open a letter and see that, oh, my gosh, the insurance for my daughter, for my son is about to expire. That is 1.9 million in January and another 1 million will lose insurance by the end of February.

Parents will panic, parents will be confused, and parents, to be sure, will have their Christmas ruined by this. Think about those families getting that letter. It should be a joyful time of year for families, spending time with family, enjoying the holidays. Imagine checking that mailbox and kind of thinking maybe this is a Christmas card and opening it and finding out it is that letter. Imagine telling your daughter: I am sorry, honey. Santa is not going to bring much this year. We don't make a lot of money—you know that—but we will not have any presents under the tree. Then you have to

look into your children's eyes—you have to look into your son's eyes, you have to look into your daughter's eyes, and you hope they don't see the worry in your eyes because you just got this letter. Now you are wondering how you will afford to take him or her to the doctor if he or she gets sick. These are often families with two working parents who, as I said, aren't lucky enough to work for an employer who provides insurance.

These are often families with children who have special needs. Like Crystal Lett and her son Noble, a first-grader in Dublin, OH, which is a suburb just west and northwest of Columbus. Crystal and her son Noble—I met them. This is obviously Noble. I met Noble and his mother Crystal in Washington this spring when they came all the way from Ohio to talk about what CHIP means to their family.

Noble was born with a rare genetic disorder. He needs three therapy sessions a week. He needs daily hormone injections to treat his condition. His medications run about \$1,500 a month.

I talked to Crystal again at the end of last month. She and her family are scared to death about what will happen to them if Congress doesn't save CHIP. She said CHIP is "the difference between living a middle class lifestyle, or being part of the poverty line." It is the difference between a middle-class lifestyle or being part of the poverty line.

Over the last several weeks, Congress was busy. Congress had the time to hand out massive tax cuts to the richest Americans and the biggest corporations but didn't have time to help these families. Some of you may have been in this Chamber a few nights ago when I pointed down the hall to Senator MCCONNELL's office, the Senate Republican leader, and described the lobbyists who went in and out of his office to get these tax breaks. It was the lobbyists from the oil companies and from the oil industry. There were lobbyists walking in and out of Senator MCCONNELL's office, the leader's office, from the tobacco companies. The lobbyists from the big drug companies and the lobbyists from Wall Street were going in and out of his office.

When you look down the hall to Senator MCCONNELL's office, do you know who didn't come out of his office? There were no lobbyists for the Children's Health Insurance Program because, you know what, children like Noble don't have lobbyists. They can't hire lobbyists. Parents are just hoping to keep their head above water because they have a child who needs medical attention, and any child obviously can need medical attention. That is the importance of CHIP.

So CHIP doesn't have a lobbyist. CHIP has people like Crystal Lett, who stands up for her family, who stands up for her children, but she can't come to Washington full time. She came here with a delegation from Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus.

Congress had time to hand out these massive tax cuts, but they don't have time for Noble Lett. It is a disgrace. It is a program that was bipartisan, and it has always been bipartisan. It was voted out of committee bipartisanly, but I guess the right crowd of lobbyists hasn't visited Senator MCCONNELL down the hall in his office. It is despicable.

We passed a bipartisan CHIP extension out of the Finance Committee. It is ready to go. If Republican leaders would put it on the floor today, it would pass. I assume it would pass with at least 90 votes. There is no excuse for this delay.

There is talk the House is going to pass a 3-month CHIP extension. We have never done that. We have extended CHIP 1 year, 2 years, 3 years. This is going to get a 5-year extension. That is what we ought to do. They are going to do a 3-month extension.

Three months provides no certainty to the States that are running CHIP. It provides no certainty to Crystal Lett to take care of Noble and manage his healthcare. It provides no certainty to anybody. The Presiding Officer's State of Alabama is already taking steps to close down their programs and freeze enrollment. I know Senator STRANGE doesn't want that to happen, but I also know Senate Republicans need to talk to their leader to make this happen.

States have to give families a heads-up so these parents have time to do what they can. Maybe some of these parents can find an alternative source of coverage, maybe they are going to fit in one more doctor's appointment before their coverage lapses. Think of that. You get this letter in the mail saying the insurance for your children is about to expire, so what do you do? You start dialing the hospital and dialing the doctor's office because you have CHIP coverage for another month or another 5 weeks or whatever, and you start scheduling any possible appointment you can, the Christmas season notwithstanding.

Providing a 3-month extension doesn't solve this problem; it just makes the situation more complicated. This body can pass massive permanent tax cuts, but they can't give families certainty? I know the tax cuts are permanent for corporations, and I know they are temporary for individual people in this country. Of course, this Congress—as special-interest controlled as it is—first takes care of corporations, but it would be nice if they gave some certainty to these children's families.

I want my colleagues to explain to the Crystal Letts in your State—because every State has thousands of concerned parents who don't know what to do with the expiration of this. My State has 209,000 children who rely on this program.

Senator HATCH said last month: We are going to get it done. Now we are hearing that Senator MCCONNELL is only going to let us vote on a 3-month extension.

This is about whose side you are on. Do we work for corporations that send our jobs overseas, or do we work for families, such as Crystal Lett and her son Noble? Do we work for families who might wake up on Christmas morning without health insurance? I guess the answer is pretty clear: Most people in this body are working for large corporations that are getting huge tax cuts and that send their jobs overseas, and they are turning their backs on those families who need us to simply do our jobs and pass this extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, yesterday President Trump and congressional Republicans went to the White House to celebrate the passage of tax legislation that was partisan and that was rammed through the Senate earlier this week without one public hearing.

Debate on this bill in the Senate is over, but I think we must not lose sight of the impact this legislation will have on so many families and on our economy.

Make no mistake—this tax bill is not tax reform. Instead, it asks middle-class families and future generations to foot the bill for massive tax breaks for large corporations and the wealthy. By adding over \$1 trillion to the national debt, this tax plan will undermine our ability to address so many of the real challenges that face this country and middle-class families in America.

Indeed, Republicans have already made clear that this tax bill is just step No. 1. What we have already heard from Members of the House is that step No. 2 is going to be next year, and that includes deep cuts to Social Security, to Medicare, and to Medicaid. They are saying we are going to have to do that to address the deficits that have been made far worse by this bill.

Meanwhile, the majority's headlong rush to ram through this tax bill has meant they jeopardized access to healthcare for tens of millions of Americans.

My colleague from Ohio just talked about so many families in his State who are worried about losing their children's health insurance. We are seeing that in New Hampshire, as well, and across this country. By considering only stop-gap, short-term reauthorizations of critical healthcare programs, fear and uncertainty have been created for countless American families.

Because the Congress has failed to enact a long-term reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program, health coverage for nearly 9 million children across the United States is at risk. Congress has failed to enact a long-term reauthorization of the

community health centers, which more than 25 million Americans rely on for essential healthcare. And according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the tax bill's repeal of the individual mandate means that nearly 13 million fewer Americans will have health coverage in the next year, and many millions more are going to pay increases in their rates.

In addition, the majority has also failed to enact a long-term reauthorization of the Special Diabetes Program. That is a devastating blow to nearly 1.25 million Americans who are living with type 1 diabetes.

All of these programs have earned strong bipartisan support. That is what is so hard to understand about this. All of these programs should have been fully reauthorized for the long term because I know my colleagues in the Senate support these programs.

Once again, we have missed a prime opportunity to address the opioid crisis. We desperately need a Federal response to the opioid epidemic that includes robust, sustained resources that match the scale of this epidemic.

Just this week, we learned from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that because of soaring overdose mortality rates, life expectancy in the United States has declined for the second year in a row. For the first time since the early 1960s, we have seen the second year of decline in life expectancy because so many people are overdosing because of substance use disorders. In 2016, 63,000 people died from overdoses. If we were losing that many people to a war in the Middle East, there would be an outcry in this country. I want to know where the outcry is, and when is this body going to act?

On Tuesday, the University of New Hampshire released a study that cited a fivefold increase over the past decade in our State of babies who were born addicted because of their parents' substance use disorders. Yet, in the face of this uncontrolled national public health emergency, the majority has once again failed to find appropriate funding.

Again, this is an issue that I know has bipartisan support. I worked with my colleagues here on the other side of the aisle to try to address this issue. Yet it has not been a priority, just as funding children's health insurance and the community health centers and other healthcare initiatives—the Special Diabetes Program—have not been a priority for funding.

This is an enormous lost opportunity. We could have written bipartisan legislation to address all of these issues, and we could have fully authorized, in a timely manner, critical health programs on which tens of millions of Americans rely. We could have addressed the opioid emergency, which is ravaging communities across this country. But instead, what did we get? We got a tax bill that makes a mockery of reform. It makes the Tax Code more complex, not less. It will grow

the deficits and our national debt. And instead of helping the middle class in reducing the complexity of our outdated Tax Code, it creates a bonanza of new loopholes for the large corporations and the wealthiest in this country.

The majority here in the Senate had no problem coming up with \$1.5 trillion in unpaid-for tax cuts for the biggest corporations in this country. In the final days before passing the tax bill, they had no problem creating a new \$700 million loophole for oil and gas partnerships that will benefit oil giants, such as Shell and Valero. They had no problem creating a new loophole for wealthy individuals with large real estate holdings—a loophole that has been described as a jackpot for the Trump family and for several Members of Congress. They had no problem retaining the carried interest loophole at a cost to the Treasury of \$20 billion. I remember during the campaign when Candidate Donald Trump railed against the carried interest loophole as a giveaway to Wall Street that was unfair to American workers. Again and again, Candidate Trump promised to kill this loophole, but President Trump now enthusiastically supports keeping it in the tax bill.

Yesterday at the White House, Republican leaders and President Trump celebrated the tax bill, while at the same time, many in the majority party insist that the Federal Government can't afford to help 9 million children who depend on the CHIP program and tens of millions of working Americans who rely on community health centers or the Affordable Care Act for access to healthcare.

Well, according to a study by the bipartisan Joint Committee on Taxation released this week, by the time many of the provisions of this tax bill expire in 2027, large corporations and the wealthiest Americans will continue to enjoy the massive permanent tax cuts because those cuts are not set to expire, but almost every income group below \$75,000 will see tax increases by 2027.

Make no mistake—this tax bill is a betrayal of middle-class Americans, and it is especially a betrayal of tens of millions of Americans who placed their faith in President Trump.

This tax bill is also a case of sadly misplaced priorities. The majority in Congress have been single-mindedly focused on passing this bill at every step, adding more and more giveaways to large corporations, instead of working across the aisle to focus on the needs of the middle class. Meanwhile, they have shortchanged the Children's Health Insurance Program, they have shortchanged community health centers, and they have shortchanged the Special Diabetes Program. They have caused hospitals and clinics across my State and across America to begin the process of reducing their services. This really demonstrates a lack of understanding and a total disregard for the

needs and priorities of so many Americans.

Yesterday, Republican leaders and the President celebrated the passage of their misguided tax bill, but Senators who care deeply about regular order and bipartisanship in this body are not celebrating. Americans concerned about our national debt and our children's future are not celebrating. Americans who see growing income inequality as a threat to our democracy—a threat made far worse by this tax bill—are not celebrating either. And parents of the 9 million children who rely on the Children's Health Insurance Program are dreading notifications from their States that their children will no longer have health insurance. These families aren't celebrating during this holiday season either.

As I said earlier, the debate on this bill is over, but I intend to continue to speak out against this very damaging tax legislation. I pledge to continue to speak out in support of the real needs of working people across America, including the need for affordable healthcare.

In the new year ahead, I certainly hope to be able to work with Senators on both sides of the aisle to address these urgent needs. The American people deserve better than this legislation. They also deserve a Senate that values bipartisanship, that values cooperation and compromise and the service of all Americans, not just the largest corporations and the wealthiest in this country.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

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

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to discuss the Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP.

As we all know, the authorization for CHIP expired at the end of September. Since that time, States have been utilizing their reserve funds in order to cover the healthcare needs of kids. For a number of States, those funds are due to run out in the near future.

There have been a number of claims from our friends on the other side and some of their allies in the media that Republicans have ignored the CHIP program; that we don't intend to reauthorize it; or that we supposedly placed a higher priority on tax cuts for the rich than on providing health insurance for needy children. Those claims are absolutely ridiculous, and they know it. It gets a little old sometimes—some of the stupid politics that are being played by the other side.

I come at this issue from two angles. I am both the original author of CHIP, and I currently chair the committee with jurisdiction over the program. Nobody should doubt my commitment to

continuing the CHIP program. For two decades now, I have been a supporter of CHIP, and I worked with Members of both parties to keep it moving forward and functioning properly—even in times when my Democratic colleagues have pursued a more divisive approach with the program. That commitment continues to this day.

On October 4, the Senate Finance Committee unanimously reported a bipartisan bill that would reauthorize CHIP for 5 years. In my view, a long-term reauthorization is essential so that States, including my home State of Utah, can plan well into the future and the families who benefit from CHIP can be sure that coverage for their needy children won't just disappear.

It appears that the year-end continuing resolution could include a short-term reauthorization for CHIP. That is far from ideal, and as the leading advocate for this program, I have no desire to see it become subject to repeated short-term fixes and constantly looming deadlines.

I intend to continue working with Senator WYDEN and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in both the Senate and the House to enact the KIDS Act in a fiscally responsible manner as soon as possible. Doing so is essential to providing certainty for families and States.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, with this week's passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, many throughout the country are rightly celebrating the first substantive reform of our Nation's Tax Code in more than three decades.

While the popular narrative surrounding this bill has been that Congress has moved quickly to pass this legislation, I don't think anyone who has worked on tax reform over the last several years would agree with that assessment. This week's success is made possible by years of hard work and the efforts of countless policymakers, experts, advocates, and public servants.

Over the last several years, I have come to the floor on many occasions to advocate for tax reform. I am glad today to be able to rise and acknowledge the efforts of many people whose work made the historic occasion possible.

First, I would like to thank those Members who went before us. Former Chairmen Camp, GRASSLEY, and Baucus spent the better part of the decade laying the groundwork for this effort.

I also want to thank Senator WYDEN, who, along with Chairman Baucus, worked with me on the Finance Committee over the last several years as we produced reports and options papers, convened bipartisan working groups, and held more than 70 hearings to discuss tax policy.

While I have been disappointed that my Democratic colleagues have opted not to participate in this year's efforts to produce this particular bill, they

definitely contributed to this knowledge and policy base we worked from to put our legislation together.

For years, I have reiterated the importance of Presidential leadership when it comes to tax reform. I am grateful that President Trump has been willing to engage with Congress on this issue and to put some political skin in the game in order to move us forward.

From the outset of this administration, Secretary Mnuchin and Director Cohn have been actively working to make this success a reality. I thank them for their engagement in this effort and the work they and their staffs have put in.

From the Treasury staff, I would like to thank Justin Muzinich, Dan Kowalski, and Jay Mackie.

From Director Cohn's staff at the National Economic Council, I need to thank Jeremy Katz and Shahira Knight.

From the White House, thanks to Mark Short, Amy Swonger, Andy Koenig, Joseph Lai, and Jim Goyer.

These staffers from the administration have worked for the better part of the year with leaders from both Chambers to produce this bill and get it over the finish line. Their success is shared with our colleagues over in the House, led by Chairman BRADY and Speaker RYAN. I thank my colleagues for their hard work and their willingness to find common ground when many believed that it was impossible to do so.

From the Ways and Means staff, I want to thank David Stewart, Matt Weidinger, Allison Halataei, Rick Limardo, and Paul Guaglianone. Special thanks is owed to the committee tax staff: Barbara Angus, Aharon Friedman, John Sandell, Victoria Glover, John Schoenecker, Randy Gartin, Aaron Junge, Donald Scheider, Danielle Dubose, Kathryn Chakmak, and Loren Ponds.

From the Speaker's office, I want to thank Jonathan Burks, Austin Smythe, George Callas, Derrick Dockery, and Josh Althouse.

From the House majority whip's office, I need to thank both Marty Reiser and Kelly Hudak.

Of course, here in the Senate, we have been ably led by the majority leader. I want to thank Senator MCCONNELL for his commitment to get this done and for his leadership throughout this entire endeavor.

From the leader's staff, I want to thank Sharon Soderstrom, Brendan Dunn, Antonia Ferrier, Hazen Marshall, Erica Suares, Terry Van Doren, Don Stewart, and Jane Lee.

Joining Senator MCCONNELL, as always, has been our distinguished majority whip. I thank Senator CORNYN for his efforts in shoring up support and addressing our Members' concerns from the beginning of this process until final passage of the conference report.

From the whip's staff, I want to thank Monica Popp and Sam Beaver.

Of course, when it came time to draft the Senate's tax reform legislation,

most of the real work was done in the Finance Committee. The committee bill was truly a shared product that included the input and addressed the interests of every majority member on our dais. Without their work, we wouldn't have had a bill, and without their commitment to seeing this through, we wouldn't have gotten to where we are.

I want to thank Senators GRASSLEY, CRAPO, ROBERTS, ENZI, CORNYN, THUNE, BURR, ISAKSON, PORTMAN, TOOMEY, HELLER, SCOTT, and CASSIDY for the months of work they put into producing and passing this legislation. I also need to thank their staffs who, until this week, haven't slept in months.

My thanks also go to the tax staffers on the committee, namely, Chris Allen, Joseph Boddicker, Chris Conlin, Shay Hawkins, Randy Herndon, Bart Massey, Monica McGuire, Mike Quickel, Zachary Rudisill, Andrew Siracuse, Robert Sneden, Derek Theurer, and Mark Warren.

My thanks go, as well, to the committee's legislative directors: Charles Cogar, Ken Flanz, Chris Gillott, Brad Grantz, Amber Kirchhoefer, Kurt Kovarik, Jessica McBride, Sarah Paul, Landon Stropko, Jay Sulzmann, Stephen Tausend, Pam Thiessen, and Christopher Toppings.

Of course, when the Democrats signaled their refusal to even meet on tax reform, we knew we would need a well-crafted budget resolution with the right instruction to get tax reform passed. So I need to thank my good friend, Chairman ENZI, and the Budget Committee for their work, which made a seemingly mundane and tedious process look easy.

From the Budget Committee staff, I want to thank Joe Brenckle, Jim Neill, Betsy McDonnell, Matt Giroux, Paul Vinovich, Becky Cole, Eric Ueland, Steve Townsend, Jeremy Dalrymple, and Thomas Fueller.

Once we had a resolution, we had to hold a markup. In the Finance Committee, that can be a challenging process, particularly on a bill this big and complex.

Thankfully, we have been ably served by a professional staff who helped us through that whole process, namely, Joshua Levasseur, Jewel Harper, Joe Carnucci, Mark Blair, Athena Schritz, Susanna Segal, Eliza Smith, Tim Corley, and Michael Pinkerton.

The Joint Committee on Taxation was also critical throughout the committee process, as well as when we moved the bill onto the floor. They worked countless hours doing the work that often just made everybody mad at one point or another. There is an often thankless but really critical job, and I am grateful for their dedication and earnestness.

Specifically, I need to thank Tom Barthold and his team for making sure both parties in the House and the Senate were getting all the information that was needed, at times under challenging time constraints. Tom does a

terrific job for the Senate, and I personally appreciate him and value him as a friend.

After moving a mark through the committee, we relied on assistance from the Senate Legislative Counsel's office to put together the legislative text. That was a critical step, and we could not have done it without Mark McGunagle, Jim Fransen, and their team.

Then as we began to prep the bill for the floor, we spent countless hours debating different provisions before the Parliamentarian. This process can be difficult, and I would like to offer my thanks to our Parliamentarian, Elizabeth MacDonough, and her team for the hours and days they put into helping us comply with the rules of the Senate.

As the bill neared its final phase, we were grateful to be able to work with Senator MURKOWSKI on the second title of the bill, and as we moved to conference committee, Senator MURKOWSKI's counterparts in the House also played an instrumental role in helping to finalize this legislation.

Of course, there are those who work hard to make sure things go smoothly here on the floor. I thank the majority floor staff for their assistance, particularly, Laura Dove, Robert Duncan, and Megan Mercer.

As I said, this has been a long process, and throughout this entire venture, I have had the benefit of working with a skilled and committed staff. My staff have sacrificed time, energy, sleep, and, in some cases, likely their physical and mental health for the passage of this bill. It has been an incredible effort, and I need to thank all of them.

I want to single out my chief tax counsel, Mark Prater. I think everyone in this Chamber and everyone in Washington would agree that we could not have done any of this without Mark.

I also need to thank my staff director, Jay Khosla, who has been the tip of the spear, managing the incoming and outgoing issues with apparent ease. I also want to thank his assistant, Jason Stegmaier, for helping to keep Jay from forgetting the important details, like remembering to eat lunch.

I want to thank my entire tax staff: Jennifer Acuna, Tony Coughlan, Christopher Hanna, Alex Monie, Eric Oman, Marty Pippins, Preston Rutledge, and Nick Wyatt.

I need to thank the members of my senior team as well: Matt Hoffmann, Jeff Wrase, Julia Lawless, Jennifer Kuskowski, Chris Armstrong, Bryan Hickman, and Shane Warren.

I want to thank my communications staff on the committee: Katie Niederee, Nicole Hager, and Joshua Blume.

I also want to thank a couple of former Finance Committee staff members, specifically, Chris Campbell, my former staff director, who helped to set the stage for this entire effort, and Jim Lyons, my tax counsel who passed

away last year, much to the sorrow of us. He spent years working on tax reform, and I know we all wish he could have been here to celebrate with us this week.

From my personal office staff, I want to thank my legislative assistant, James Williams, and Matt Sandgren, my chief of staff.

There are many more people who deserve thanks this week—far too many to mention at this time. They are not forgotten, though, believe me.

We have done a good thing here this week. This is truly a historic success.

Some of our colleagues on the other side last night said that the American people will remember what happened here this week. To that, all I can say is that I hope they do. This new tax law will do a lot of good for a great number of people throughout our country, and I am humbled to have been a part of the efforts of so many people who were willing to get this thing done for the American people.

I am grateful to my staff. I am grateful to the staffs of our Senators on the committee. I am grateful for everyone involved in the Finance Committee and for the good efforts that they put forward. But I am really grateful that I serve in the U.S. Senate, the greatest deliberative body in the world, and this is a perfect illustration of why.

I am very grateful to be able to stand on this floor and show my complete devotion to this wonderful government. To both sides of the floor—Democrats and Republicans alike—I am grateful. I am grateful that we have this Constitution to guide us, and I am grateful that for the most part, we have abided by it.

With that, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT *pro tempore*. The Senator from Oklahoma.

NOMINATIONS PROCESS

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, maybe my colleagues have heard through public and private conversations over the past year that I believe the Senate is moving gridlock from here on Capitol Hill to all across the city and across the Nation. The reason for that is how we do nominations and the length of time on nominations. It is time for the Senate to fix the Senate's rules.

Here is how it works. As this body knows extremely well, we have over 1,000 nominees who come from the President. In the first year of a new Presidency, a vast amount of time is spent in getting those 1,000 people through the nomination process. Each one of those is selected by the White House. They do their own vetting, and then they send them over to the Senate.

The Senate has the constitutional responsibility for advice and consent. When they come through the Senate, they will go through background checks, evaluations, and conversations with staff on both sides of the aisle.

They then come to the committee, go through a committee process and a hearing, they are voted on in that time period, and then they move to the floor.

When they move to the floor for debate, typically, for most of the years of the Senate, they have already gone through the committee process. Every Member of the Senate has the opportunity to be able to take a look at their information. And then they move through with a simple-majority vote. That is the way nominations have moved for most of the history of the Senate.

A few years ago—20 or so—some individual Senators started asking for cloture votes. Those cloture votes started to slow down the process on about 3 or 4 nominations a year; then it became 9 or so nominations a year; then it moved to as crazy of a number as 13 or so a year, of the 1,000 or so moving through.

That became such a nuisance that in 2013, my Democratic colleagues called for something they called the nuclear option, to say we will just take nominations not from 60 required to be able to get to cloture but just to 51. There was debate and internal conversation about that because Republicans, quite frankly, were holding up 15 or so nominations a year with the cloture process. So there was a big debate about that.

In the beginning of President Obama's second term, Republicans and Democrats came together and they changed the rules of the Senate for 2 years and said: OK, truce. The simple rule of the Senate was for any cloture vote, if there was one called for—again, typically, you would never call for one, but if there was one called for, there would be 2 hours of debate for a district court judge, 8 hours of debate for most nominees, and 30 hours of debate for Supreme Court, circuit court, or a Cabinet-level appointment. But even Harry Reid, when he stood on the floor, said this would be only—his words—“extraordinary circumstances” if you should ask for a cloture vote at all. But if they were asked for, it would be 2 hours, 8 hours, or 30 hours. Prior to that, all nominations were 30 hours of debate, literally taking up an entire day to move one person, knowing that you have to move 1,000.

A few months after that, still in 2013, Democrats still frustrated that Republicans were calling for some cloture votes still, moved to have the nuclear option entirely and just transition all nominations, except for the Supreme Court, to just 51 votes. So now they had the rule of expediting 2 hours, 8 hours, and 30 hours, and the new ability to move them all with just 51 votes.

Quite frankly, if you are going to change the rule to 51 votes, you probably need to change the cloture rule as well. They just did it in reverse. They changed the rule for how many hours it would take and then later changed the rule for how many people it takes to go through the process.

Now what has happened? Remember I argued that we had 13, 14, 15 people held up in cloture in a year? This year, so far, there have been 64 nominations held up in cloture votes. That is 64 days in the Senate we could do nothing else but sit here waiting. Now, it wasn't for debate. It may sound as if it is being held for 30 hours of debate for that time period. Debate normally didn't happen. Most of the time, this Chamber was empty. It was just that 30 hours was demanded to shut down the body as a whole, 64 of those in this year.

What has it brought us? It has brought us more animosity, more division, and more frustration. My Democratic colleagues a few years ago were screaming that we should have the nuclear option because Republicans were so irrational with 15 cloture votes. Yet we have watched 64 occur this year.

Earlier this week, I sat down with the Rules Committee and brought a very simple option to everyone, Democrats and Republicans alike, and we had a great turnout to be able to just talk through the process. My simple presentation was, let's take the rule that was agreed to in 2013, that Harry Reid and the Democrats brought at the beginning of the second term of President Obama, and let's have the rule for each nomination be 2 hours, 8 hours, and 30 hours. Let's move back to the tradition that Harry Reid had, which is to say let's make cloture votes only extraordinary on a nomination, if needed at all, but if they are, 2 hours, 8 hours, or 30 hours. To do the exact same thing now is what was agreed on in 2013 and 2014.

By the way, Republicans joined with Democrats during that time period and passed that new rule, which would put us at disadvantage with 78 votes.

I don't think it is too much to ask to say that if we are going to get the Senate back to work again, then let's actually get back to work again. Let's put us in a process that actually gets there.

What happens in the meantime when that does not occur? I will tell you what happens. In the meantime, we have agencies all over this town that can't answer a question because the bureaucrats are waiting on a Senate-confirmed individual to be able to lead that agency—to be the Secretary, Under Secretary, Deputy Secretary, whatever the task may be, the counsel for that particular agency—so they sit and wait. So our constituents who are trying to get a permit in certain places or trying to get an answer or trying to get disaster relief—all they can say in the office is, we can't do that until we get a Senate-confirmed position in place. But we can't get Senate-confirmed positions in place until my Democratic colleagues will actually allow individuals to actually come up and be debated.

What else happens? The other thing that happens is, we can't do legislation in this body; we can only do nominations. With 1,000 different positions

that are open, typically they move through rather quickly and they move through the process. But when 64 days are held up just for that, during that time period, you can't do anything else but sit and go through what is called the cloture 30 hours. You can't bring up other legislation.

Then what happens? Well, then my Democratic colleagues come to the floor and say: We haven't had a single debate in this body on CHIP. We haven't had a debate on infrastructure. We haven't had debate on any of these things. Why won't we move a bill on all of these things?

At the same time, they know it is because they blocked the floor from being able to move legislation because of continual cloture votes over and over and over. It is a bizarre game that doesn't lead to solutions; it leads to greater animosity. It is the same frustration that has existed for a while; it is just getting louder.

At some point, we have to put in a process and say: How do we get out of this? How do we fix this? I think the best way to fix this is to take a bipartisan solution that was agreed to before when Democrats were in the lead, to agree to it now and say that is going to be the permanent rule, just to be able to move a set of ideas.

For what is historically called the greatest deliberative body in the world, wouldn't it be nice to actually get back to deliberating again, spending more time on legislation rather than more time arguing about why aren't debating it when everyone secretly knows the reason, which is because we can't get it to the floor?

I do grow tired. I grow tired of hearing all the political statements and accusations.

Republicans hate children.

They want to throw them out.

They don't want them to have health care.

They hate people of color.

They are trying to exclude people from voting.

They are trying to keep people from having tax reform.

They only care about the wealthy.

Just over and over, when at the same time, the undercurrent is out there to keep anything from being discussed on the floor. It is an interesting strategy to paint your "enemy," but it doesn't help the country—intentionally divisive without a solution.

In 2001, the first year of a new President, there were 51 nominations pending that first year.

There is an interesting thing in the Senate rules. It is the wonderful rule XXXI that no one has heard of. It states that at the end of a year, any nominations that are still out there can be automatically thrown back to the White House and they have to start all over again. They have to renominate them. They have to go through the whole process. They have to go through committees.

At the end of the first year of President Bush, there were 51 nominations

still sitting there at the end of that year. On 49 of them, this body, by unanimous consent, said: No, we will just hold them over. We are fine. We don't have to send them all back to the President.

In 2009, in President Obama's first term, there were 72 folks. For 64 of those, this body—every Republican and Democrat—agreed to just leave them here and not make them go through the whole process again, which would have been absurd.

As of now, we have 122 pending at the end of President Trump's first year. I am interested to know, when Republicans gave Democrats unanimous consent to be able to maintain their nominations in the past, what happens now. Will this be yet another sign of pure politics rather than actually helping the country get stuff done?

I look forward to the day when we can work toward solutions, not just argue and banter back and forth with political statements. If we are going to get stuff solved, let's not pretend and play games and put each other down; let's actually sit down in a room and get stuff solved. Let's fix the rules of the Senate, whether they be the budget rules that keep us from actually having real budget debates or the rules of the Senate that keep us from actually working rather than allowing us to actually do work.

The rules of the Senate and the process in the Senate are determined by the Senators, so we alone are to blame when the Senate is not working. There is no finger-pointing. There is no "it is that party." There is no "it is that person." It is all of us.

So my recommendation is simple. Let's fix it. Let's resolve the issue. Let's do the right thing in the right way.

With that, I yield the floor.

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

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, this is not the topic that I came to the floor to talk about; I will talk about it in a minute. But while the Senator from Oklahoma is here, I thought I would just respond to what he was saying—not on the merits of his particular proposal, because I haven't had a chance to study that yet, but to his plea that this place start to work again. I couldn't agree more with that sentiment.

The Founding Fathers were very deliberate people, and they understood that in exercising self-government in the Republic that they were establishing, which subsequent generations of Americans have made more democratic over time, that we would have disputes. People these days in our political system and especially on the cable television at night seem to be astounded that there are people who don't see the world the way they see the world. The Founders knew that, by definition, if we were going to be a self-governing republic, we would have disagreements, and they set out to form

an incredibly elegant mechanism to resolve those disputes. It was elegant on the outside of this Chamber—freedom to assemble, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to vote—and it was elegant on the inside of this Chamber. And generations of people who occupied this place understood that the way it was meant to work was not that you always got your way all the time and that part of being here was not just to have disputes but to resolve disputes—and not even our disputes but disagreements that the country might have for a legitimate reason—and, on average, hoped that we would move the country forward.

I quite agree that recently—certainly in the time that I have been here—we have been using this place simply to have disputes, not to resolve them. That may be OK if we were in North Korea or in the Soviet Union—the old Soviet Union; it doesn't work in a democratic republic.

I want to finish a little bit of the history that my friend from Oklahoma talked about. After the Democrats invoked the nuclear option, which I have said before on this floor is the worst vote that I ever took as a Senator, the now majority leader pocketed that precedent when we changed the rules in the middle and used it—used the nuclear option to change the rules so that now a person gets a lifetime appointment on the Supreme Court not with 60 votes but with just 51 votes. My issue with that is that now your party can advance people to the Supreme Court without any reasonable expectation that my party should take responsibility for it, or vice versa.

Instead of having potential nominees come here and say: You should put me on the court because I can attract both Democratic and Republican votes because I have an open mind, I worry we are going to have people from both sides say: We are going to have a litmus test for Supreme Court nominees, which says we either have the most conservative jurist in the country or the most liberal jurist in the country, depending on who it is. We have infected the Supreme Court with the partisanship of this body.

My hope is, we can actually come together on a set of rule changes that would recognize not just that this place may need to move a little faster in the 21st century but that we ought to be pushing people together to work in a bipartisan way on behalf of the country.

Without passing on the merits of the proposal, I thank the Senator for coming to the floor to talk about—to put it in the vernacular—how busted this place is.

DACA

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I wish to talk about the Dreamers.

As I have from the time I was a school superintendent in Denver until now, I had the opportunity to spend

time last weekend or the week before with a group of Dreamers in Alamosa, a small town in Southern Colorado.

These meetings are usually occasions for people to lay out their dreams for the future in America, the only country they know and the only country they love. This meeting was different than other meetings I have had recently. Instead of the hope and self-confidence I am so used to hearing from young people, what I heard was fear, anxiety, and pain.

Everybody in the group I met the other day came to this country as undocumented immigrants when they were children, some just months old. None of them made the decision to come here. They grew up here, and they know no other country besides the United States of America.

In 2012, they joined 800,000 Dreamers who came forward across the country to share their information for temporary legal status under the DACA Program. Over the past 5 years, many of these Dreamers grew into young adults, finishing school, starting families, launching businesses. They went about their lives, trusting our government would keep its word and find a way for them to stay in the only country they know. Then, in September, President Trump rescinded DACA, throwing every one of their lives into chaos.

During our meeting in Alamosa, not a single person could share their story without breaking into tears. One young man, Julio Maldonado, told me about the iPhone repair business he opened on Main Street. Like so many immigrants, he poured himself into that enterprise as an entrepreneur. Thanks to his efforts, it is now not only turning a profit, it is providing a service to his community and supporting his family. Now all of that is in jeopardy.

As I said, Julio couldn't tell his story without starting to cry. When he turned to his business partner who was also there to help, his partner began crying too. Versions of that played out again and again in our meetings and in the meetings I have been having here in Washington, DC, as Dreamers take the risk to travel to Washington to share their stories—honest dream after honest dream being crushed by uncertainty, young people trembling in fear.

We hear a lot around this place about how we don't have to act until the last moment. We don't have to act until March 5. This is not true. There are so many children, young people, and young adults in my State who are losing their status as we sit here, unable to accomplish something everybody seems to say they want to accomplish. The President says he wants to accomplish it. The Speaker says he wants to accomplish it. Senators on both sides say they want to accomplish it. We have created this crisis that President Trump set off when he rescinded DACA.

This isn't just affecting Dreamers, although that ought to be enough for us

to do the job we are supposed to do. For years, farmers and ranchers have told us they need workers with clear legal status. Undocumented workers have told us they face exploitation without legal resources. Families have told us they fear being split apart and sent to places they hardly know, and, today, this week, those fears were confirmed again as we lost another father from Colorado. Just last week, we had a family torn apart in Colorado.

Melecio Andazola came to America in 1998 as an undocumented immigrant. Over the last 19 years, he has paid taxes in America, he has raised four children in America, he has followed the rules. Then, on Friday, he was deported.

Now it is unclear whether he will ever see his daughter walk across the stage for her college graduation next spring at Yale, in New Haven. It is unclear how he will be able to support his four kids. Because of the choices we have made in Washington, the lives of everyone in that family have been spun into chaos, like so many other families across the country.

For years, stories like this have demanded action. That is why the Senator from Illinois who is here today, Senator DURBIN, has led this charge for so many years, standing on the floor with photos of the Dreamers from his State and across the United States. It is the reason I was so honored to have the chance to work with him and six others of our colleagues back in 2013, the so-called Gang of 8, a group of four Democrats and four Republicans.

I was just talking with my friend from Oklahoma about how this place doesn't work. That was an instance where it worked. We came together to write a bipartisan proposal for immigration reform. Over the course of 8 months, in Washington, we worked through a process that I think would make every American proud for once—both sides sitting down to solve problems. The result was a great piece of legislation.

Our bill had more funding for border security, not just a wall but smart and effective border security. It had more funding for internal security. It had a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented people who are here, including all of the Dreamers. Part of that bill had the most progressive DREAM Act ever written. It got 68 votes on the floor of the Senate. Not everyone got what they wanted. As I just said to the Senator from Oklahoma in a different context, it is unreasonable to expect that here. Each side had to give, but the result was a great vote. It got almost 70 votes in the Senate, at a time when you can't pass anything through the Senate.

For the first time in a generation, we had a real opportunity to resolve our differences on immigration, but as is so often the case in Washington, politics got in the way. In the House, Republican leaders denied our bill a simple up-or-down vote, which would have

passed. They preferred to keep immigration alive as a political weapon to divide the American people and distract from the real challenges in our economy.

By the way, the Senator from Illinois will remember this. We heard a lot of stretching this week about how much economic growth this tax bill was going to create—0.6 percent here or 0.1 percent over there. The CBO estimate on the Gang of 8 immigration bill was that by bringing people out of the shadows and putting them in a position to contribute legally to the economy, that would have added 3 percentage points to our GDP, to our Nation's economy over the first 10 years, and five incremental points over the second 10 years. That would have been a useful thing to do for our economy.

As a result of what happened—or didn't happen—in the House, the rhetoric around immigration has just become more toxic, evermore divisive, evermore unrecognizable in America, a Nation that has inarguably been made great by immigrants.

As I said, there are a lot of economists who are awfully skeptical about the economic claims that have been made about this tax bill. If we look at what happened in 2001 and 2003, when they tried to do it before, we all know how that story is going to end. On the other hand, nearly every expert agrees that forcing out the Dreamers would hurt our economy.

The Cato Institute found that removing the Dreamers would stunt economic growth by \$280 billion. Another study found that comprehensive immigration reform would grow the economy by \$1.5 trillion over 10 years and support nearly 1 million new jobs.

Despite these facts, there has been a lot of talk around here about how immigrants detract from America or how they somehow leach off the system and lack our values. Those claims are then used to justify actions like canceling DACA. It would be hard for me to believe that anybody making a claim like that had ever sat down with a Dreamer.

Daniela Gomez Castro came to Colorado when she was just a year old. As a child, Daniela looked up to her grandmother—one of the few women doctors in her area—and dreamed of following her into medicine. She took classes in biology and excelled in our public schools, graduating from Smoky Hill High School in 2015.

To become a doctor, she knew college was the next step, so she enrolled at the University of Colorado Denver as a prehealth major, and in between classes, she worked as a nurse's assistant, restaurant hostess, and student mentor to help cover tuition. Everything was on track. Then, last year, she learned her legal status meant she couldn't get a medical license. After working so hard for so long, her dream is now frozen in place by forces in Washington totally beyond her control.

Today, America—especially places like rural Colorado—is desperate for

physicians. The Association of American Medical Colleges predicts that, by 2030, we will have a shortage of 100,000 doctors nationwide. As I say, we are feeling that shortage right now in rural Colorado. We don't have enough clinics and treatment centers, even as we face an epidemic of opioid addiction. Two of our counties don't have a single doctor, and a lot of our rural counties have no primary care doctor or nurse.

Given that, it doesn't seem to me to make any sense that we should send Daniela back to a place she doesn't remember and doesn't call her home, especially when we need her here. That obviously would be cruel, but my point is, it would also be incredibly shortsighted.

Apolinar Lopez Garcia also came here when he was just a year old. His family eventually made their way to Greeley, CO. He thrived in school and joined the Junior ROTC Program in Northridge High School, where he excelled as a cadet. He relished the ROTC sense of community, self-discipline, and duty, so much so that after graduating from high school, he wanted to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps. He filled out the paperwork and waited, but when the reply came, Apolinar was crushed. Because of his legal status, the Marines couldn't accept him.

We should think about that. Of all the paths available to a bright, young person like Apolinar, he wanted to serve the country in uniform. You don't feel called to serve a place you don't consider home. You don't feel called to serve a place where you don't share the values, to defend a community that is not your own. Apolinar's choice flies in the face of every specious attack we have heard against immigrants in this debate. He doesn't detract from America.

Apolinar wants to defend America. Daniela wants to treat sick Americans. Julio wants to create jobs for Americans. They join 800,000 Dreamers who, for years, have invested in America by paying taxes, starting businesses, and serving their communities. For years, America has invested in them, by educating them, by training them, and instilling in them the confidence and love of country we hope for each new generation of Americans.

It is unimaginable now that we wouldn't find a way to resolve their status. We can't avoid this any longer. The Senate and the House are so good at putting off what they should have done last week or last month or last year. This is not one of those cases anymore.

On each day we do nothing, 112 people are deported. Over 12,000 people have been deported since September. Every one of them represents a family torn apart, a business shuttered, a payroll not made, an education interrupted, a dream shattered. In the end, our most basic job here—lost in this sometimes—is to look out for the next generation of Americans. Instead of looking after them, we have spent an entire year trampling over them.

Let's review the record.

With the Dreamers, we have ransomed their futures for political leverage. We are doing it right now. With our backtracking on climate change, we have made their futures more dangerous and costly. With our failure to reauthorize CHIP, we have jeopardized the healthcare of, among others, 90,000 kids in Colorado who may lose healthcare if we don't act. Now, with this tax bill, we have handed another \$1.4 trillion in debt to people whose futures we are not investing in because we say we cannot afford to do it—by rebuilding our roads, by improving our schools, by spurring innovation. Instead, we have taken another bet on trickle-down economics at a time when we already have a substantial budget deficit.

That is what brings us here at the end of the year, once again, with our not having done our work and passing something called a continuing resolution that no other government enterprise in America gets to do—a temporary budget that doesn't reflect the priorities of the American people. In that mix, the Dreamers find themselves caught up in a political discussion without any assurance that it will be resolved.

The good news is that I know there are Republican colleagues here, as well as Democrats, who want a solution for the Dreamers. They see in these young people all of the qualities we cherish as Americans—family, community, service, enterprise, and patriotism.

I would just say, as we get ready to leave here, that I think we shouldn't leave here today. I think we should commit to this issue with our Dreamers. This should be our No. 1 priority together—to figure out how to get this done so we don't have inadvertent casualties occur. After a while, something inadvertent has to be advertent because if you have knowledge of it and if you know what is going to happen, it leads you to believe that you should have acted. We need to stop the brinksmanship and the partisanship, and we need to work together to ensure that their futures will be here in the United States, where we need them, in the only country they know.

I thank my colleagues for their indulgence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Colorado. We have been engaged in this battle of immigration reform for years. He is a worthy ally, thoughtful, and always thinking of a solution. I thank him for his continuing commitment to this cause.

In the midst of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln got so frustrated with General McClellan that he sent him a message. He couldn't get him to attack. He wouldn't do anything.

He asked: General McClellan, if you are not going to use your Army, can I use it? Can I borrow your Army?

So I would like to ask the leaders of the House and Senate: If you are not going to use your Congress, can I borrow it for a minute? Can we fill up this empty Chamber and actually have a real debate over a real bill to solve a real problem?

I think that might be a worthy thing for us to do. In fact, I think that is what we are paid to do; isn't it? Didn't we swear to uphold this Constitution? Didn't we take this historic job on with the goal of making America a better place?

On September 5, President Trump, along with Attorney General Sessions, eliminated the DACA Program. This was a program that gave to almost 800,000 young people—brought to the United States when they were little kids—a chance to go to school, to work, to have futures in this country. They had to go through criminal background checks, turn over all of their information, and pay their taxes—all of the above. Then, for 2 years, they could operate in America. They were not citizens, but they were legally in America. On September 5, President Trump and Attorney General Sessions said: It is over—as of March 5, 2018, no more.

Then the President said: I challenge you, Congress. Do something about it. Pass a law.

That was almost 4 months ago. What have we done in 4 months to address this problem that affects the lives of 800,000 DACA-protected young people? Nothing. We are not using this Congress. General McClellan was not using the Army. Isn't it time that we do something? Wouldn't the American people be so pleasantly surprised if we did something on a bipartisan basis that solved a problem in America?

I know my Republican colleagues are euphoric over their tax bill. Two out of three Americans are not. I am not. I will put it aside for a minute. They spent a lot of time. They passed it. So be it. They did it on a strictly partisan basis. They had a right under the Senate rules to do it that way, and they did it that way. This cannot be done on a strictly partisan basis. You cannot fix the immigration system unless you engage both political parties in the solution.

I am lucky. I care about this. I also found some Republican Senators who care just as much. JEFF FLAKE of Arizona announced his retirement. I am sorry to see him go because he is a good person of good values. He stepped up and cosponsored the Dream Act that we are talking about here. I didn't even have to call him on the phone. I thanked him, and he said: It is the right thing to do. LINDSEY GRAHAM, a Republican of South Carolina, was my cosponsor. CORY GARDNER of Colorado and LISA MURKOWSKI of Alaska stepped up and said: It is the right thing to do for these young people, to give them an opportunity to earn their way into legal status, to earn their way to citizenship.

I thank them for that. We need eight more. If we get 8 more, we will have 12

Republicans out of 52. With eight more, we are ready. We are ready to put 60 votes up when they call the roll. With 60 votes in the Senate, you can get things done.

What has happened? What opportunities have we had in the almost 4 months since the President eliminated this program? None—not one.

Senator MCCONNELL said to Senator FLAKE when his vote on the tax bill was in doubt: I promise you that we will bring this up in January—this coming January.

I can tell you that I read the promise very closely, and there are a lot of contingencies on there. I hope that Senator MCCONNELL is going to give us our chance early in January to find out if we can come up with a bipartisan solution to this problem.

If you think there aren't other Republicans who support this, 34 Republicans in the House of Representatives sent a letter to Speaker PAUL RYAN and wrote: Pass the Dreamer legislation this year—34 Republicans. So we are not alone. They are not the only ones.

Yesterday, 11 Governors—11 of them, Republicans and Democrats—sent a letter to Congress, calling on us to do this. The letter was signed by the Democratic Governors from Minnesota, Montana, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina and by the Republican Governors from Nevada, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Utah, and by Alaska's Independent Governor.

We are hearing from those in the business community. They want this done. They have seen these Dreamers. They have seen these young people. They believe in them, and they want us to do something to help them. We have heard it from the labor organizations, and we have heard it from the faith organizations.

Across the board, 76 percent of the American people support what we are trying to do here—76 percent. What issues get 76 percent? The flag? I will bet you it gets even more, but not many others get 76 percent approval, including 61 percent of the Trump voters. They think it is the right thing to do. Do you know why? Because many of these people have met the Dreamers. When you come to know them and hear their stories, you come to the conclusion—at least I do—that, for goodness' sake, these are extraordinary young people. Somehow or another, they have survived and have even flourished in a country that doesn't recognize them as legal. They went to our schools. They pledged allegiance to our flag. They sang the national anthem. That is the country they know.

Let me tell you about one before I turn the floor over to my colleague from Maryland. This young lady's name is Miriam Gonzalez. She is the 105th Dreamer whose story I have told on the floor.

When she was 6 years old, her family brought her to the United States from Mexico, and she grew up near Los An-

geles. She was a good student and a good athlete. In high school she played softball and golf. She was a member of the bible club, the chemistry club, and the reading club. She was an active volunteer in her community, including assistant teaching at the local elementary school. She was the valedictorian of her high school class. She was accepted at UCLA. She majored in anthropology and minored in classical civilization.

Let me give a postscript here. If you are undocumented and go to college in America, you get no Federal assistance—no Pell grant, no Federal loan. You have to earn the money. You have to work jobs to do it. She did. She held down the necessary jobs and commuted to school from her parents' home by taking public transportation for 2 hours each way on every schoolday.

She was involved in student groups, mentored students at Van Nuys High School, and encouraged them to go to college. She continued to excel academically. She made the dean's honor roll and was awarded a certificate for her research at UCLA. Today, she is assisting students in low-income neighborhoods and schools.

After graduation, she went to work with Teach For America. Do you know what that means? It means taking a job that pays hardly anything to teach in one of the most challenging schools in America. She did it. She taught seventh- and eighth-grade students in L.A. She teaches five classes for students who are having trouble with math and reading, and she gives one-on-one tutoring.

She is involved in the school's parents committee and tries to get the parents of these kids who need their helping hands to excel as well. She is a full-time graduate student at Loyola Marymount University, where she is pursuing a master's degree in education.

I am going to read her letter and then turn over the floor.

Every day for [my] first two months [as a teacher] my students would ask me if I would be returning the next day, week, and month, and I would reassure them that I was there to stay. Eventually, they began to trust me and believe that I was there to support them. . . . Now students believe that I am there for them and truly care about helping and preparing [them] to succeed academically. My students have made huge improvements academically, [and] I am particularly proud of how hard they all work. After hearing about the fate of DACA—

She is talking about President Trump abolishing DACA—

my students were worried that they would be losing me. I continue to reassure them that I am not going anywhere anytime soon and will fight to be able to see them finish middle school.

What is going to happen to her if we don't do what we are supposed to do—if we don't use this Senate and that House to solve this problem? What is going to happen to her and her students? Are we so busy? Do you notice it on the floor? Are we so busy that we

can't take up a piece of legislation here, debate it, and pass it today?

Before the end of the day, we are going to pass a measure to keep the government open and functioning for about 3 or 4 weeks. It is something that may pass the House. We will find out later this afternoon. I am troubled by it. It doesn't have one word in it to deal with this challenge, and we have known for 4 months that it was coming and that we had to do it.

I am going to be voting no on that, and it is not because of the merits of the continuing resolution. Until we address this issue and take the time to use the Senate and use the House to solve this problem, I am not going to be standing here and saying: I am going home for Christmas. I don't know what is going to happen to Miriam. I don't know what is going to happen to 800,000 others—get back to you later. The time is now for us to solve this problem.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I thank Senator DURBIN for his extraordinary leadership on this issue and so many others.

The Dreamers are part of this country. They are America's future. They are helping to build this great Nation, and they need our attention now.

The Republicans control the House, the Senate, and the White House. One of their principal responsibilities is to pass a budget. We are now 3 months into the fiscal year, and we don't have a budget, and we are talking about another continuing resolution. A couple of weeks ago, we were told on the floor to give it a couple of more weeks, and we would work out some of these issues. I agree with Senator DURBIN. The time to act is now. We should not be going into recess without dealing with the problems of our country. We need to deal with the budget problem, and we, certainly, need to deal with the problem of the Dreamers. Let me just talk a little bit about them.

They entered the United States before they were 16 years old—that is required—before 2007. Under President Obama's Executive order of 2012, they were entitled to a 2-year renewable work permit and the ability to remain in this country without being in fear of deportation. Each one has to go through a criminal background check. They need to be enrolled in school. They must either be high school graduates or in the U.S. military. In the United States today, we have 800,000 who are registered under the Dreamers. There are 10,000 in my State of Maryland, and they are contributing a half a billion dollars to Maryland's GDP, or gross domestic product. They are our next generation of teachers, doctor, engineers, and entrepreneurs. They are going to help build America, and they know no other country but the United States, which is their home.

In our values, what makes America the great Nation that it is is that we

are a welcoming country. We are a country in which people have come over the years to build this great Nation. That is America's strength.

Are we going to turn our back now on the values that built this country? Are we going to rip families apart? Is that what America stands for? I find that hard to imagine. Would we do this to our own economy and hurt ourselves, as we are growing with their help?

I have met with many Dreamers, not as many as Senator DURBIN. He probably has the record. But I met with several Dreamers in Maryland. We had one in our office yesterday who had tears in her eyes. She said: I have an expiration date on my back. She doesn't know what is going to happen when that date occurs.

How would you like to live under that fear in the United States of America? We are not talking about some communist country. We are talking about America, where people are living in fear.

I have had several roundtable discussions with Dreamers in Maryland. I have had them in College Park, Baltimore, and in other areas. Let me mention two Dreamers I met with. Adam was originally born in Canada. His family grew up in Pakistan. He came to the United States with his parents when he was very young. Becky was born in Peru and came here with her parents to the United States. I mention them collectively because they both attend the University of Maryland at College Park. Our State allows Dreamers to have in-state tuition so they can go to college and get the tools they need in order to succeed. They need work permits because they have to work. Otherwise, they never would have been able to get through school. They need a driver's license. Adam explained to me that he needed a driver's license to go to a magnet school so that he could advance his own education. That was all possible through President Obama's Executive order. Now all of that has been put into doubt because of President Trump's announcements that the program will end. It puts their lives on hold and in fear, and they wonder whether they need to go into the shadows in the United States of America.

President Trump's actions were wrong. We can correct that, and Congress must act. We must act now before we go home for the holidays.

I wish to talk about a similar group of people in our country—a large number in my State of Maryland—those under Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, because it is a similar situation. There are 437,000 people in America from El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. In Maryland, 22,500 people are here from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti—from those three countries alone—and 90 percent of the TPS people in this country are from El Salvador, Honduras and Haiti, the three principal countries. My own

State's recipients contribute \$1.2 billion of our gross domestic product. This is a very similar situation to the Dreamers. They get a 6- to 18-month extension. They have been here for decades because the underlying conditions in the countries from which they came still exist today. I have been to Central America. I can tell you that it is not safe for these people to be returned to those gang activities. They have the same similar situation. They know no other country but America. If they are required to go back to the country in which they were born, it will tear families apart. They have been disadvantaged by the President's actions where he is now threatening to end these programs.

We need to act. We need to act in order to protect this group of citizens. I want to acknowledge that my colleagues have introduced legislation on this. S. 2144 provides a pathway to citizenship for those with TPS status. It is sponsored by Senators Van Hollen, Feinstein, and others. We should take that bill up and pass it. Let's provide protections. Let's strengthen American values. Let's do our work. Let's do it now. Let's do it before we go on recess. It is the right thing to do.

Let me just conclude by quoting from Becky again, one of the Dreamers I met. She said the best present she ever got was on her 13th birthday, when President Obama executed the Executive order that gave her legal status and hope here in America.

Well, we can give her an even better present right now before we take the recess for the Christmas holidays. We can give her a present of Congress, acting to provide protection for the Dreamers and for those on TPS so they don't have to worry again and they know they have a home here in America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am delighted to join my colleagues here in support of these kids who are known as Dreamers or DACA kids, who came in under the statute or under President Obama's program and who have lived here for many years in this country, passed all the requirements, and met all the standards. These are good kids. There is absolutely no reason for them to be the target of the kind of anxiety and fear that they are being put through to score political points. It really doesn't make sense.

By definition, these kids came to the United States of America under the age of 16. You can't even enforce a contract against a minor in this country. They do not have the legal capacity in most places to buy a sofa. Yet we are holding them to account for decisions that their parents made when they were small children.

One of the Rhode Islanders who will be affected by this came to the United States when she was 8 years old. Think of the kind of decisions that your 8-

year-old kids make or that you were making when you were 8 years old. This is a very successful young lady who is now at the Brown medical school. She is going to make enormous contributions to our country. Tossing her out or putting her in peril makes no sense whatsoever, particularly when the problems started when she was brought to this country by her parents when she was 8 years old.

Another Rhode Islander who contacted me came to the country when she was 7 years old. She is now a teacher in a middle school in Central Falls, RI. Central Falls is a community that is emerging from bankruptcy. It has got its feet back under it now. It has a wonderful, exciting young mayor. Spirits are up, and things are going well. But it is not easy to be a middle-school teacher anywhere, and to be a middle-school teacher in a small city that has just come out of bankruptcy is not easy. This is a valuable person to Rhode Island. Losing her adds no value to anyone.

Another person who contacted me came to the United States at 10 months old. At 10 months old, they barely even knew where they were. He came from Portugal at 10 months old. Now he has a college degree in computer science. He is ready to make his contribution to our country. He has done everything right and has played by the rules, and we are loading him up with all this anxiety and peril because of a decision his parents made when he was 10 months old.

You can't go out, as I said, and buy a sofa on the installment plan at 8 years old. Yet we are trying to penalize these kids. It makes no sense at all.

It doesn't even make economic sense. The studies I have seen show that disrupting the lives of these 800,000 Dreamer kids—90 percent of whom are in the workforce—would reduce the U.S. GDP by \$460 billion over the next decade. They are making a serious contribution here.

In Rhode Island, the delta is about \$200 million in annual State GDP between having the Dream Act pass and losing the DACA kids. We would stand to gain as much as \$150 million in annual GDP if the Dream Act passes, and ending DACA will result in an annual loss of \$60 million to our GDP. So just in my small State, there is \$200 million in economic result annually from solving this problem in a way that is humane and consistent with the way we treat children in virtually every other element of the law.

Sadly, a lot of this is twisted up in the continued fight over immigration, which the Senate really tried to solve. I am on the Judiciary Committee. Senator DURBIN was on the Judiciary Committee at the time. Under Chairman LEAHY's leadership, we went through hundreds of amendments and we took dozens of votes. Some 90 amendments were incorporated into the bill. It came out of the Judiciary Committee by a bipartisan vote of 13 to 5.

It came on to the Senate floor, where there were amendments. There actually was some regular order. Hundreds of amendments were considered, and the final bill passed on June 27 by 68 to 32.

Then our bipartisan Senate bill went over to the House, where the Speaker of the House refused even to bring it up—no hearing, no vote, nothing. They just froze it out. So there is a long history of why we are here today, but the price should not be paid by these kids, not when the original problem was something that was done when they were children—10 months old.

President Lincoln talked about “the better angels of our nature.” Let's show these kids the better angels of our nature. Let's do something decent, something bipartisan, something that is right, and let's do it soon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, over the years there has been a lot of debate on the Senate floor, from healthcare to tax reform. There is no doubt that some days it feels impossible to get the majority of Republicans onboard with policies that truly help the families we represent. But there is one thing that unites not only a large bipartisan contingent in Congress but also the vast majority of American people, and that is finding a path forward for the estimated 800,000 young men and women whose lives are right now in limbo—800,000 people, including 17,000 men, women, boys, and girls from my home State of Washington who shared their information, paid a large fee, and upheld their end of the bargain, only to have President Trump rip the rug out from under them 3 months ago when he and Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the end of the DACA Program.

This Congress may not be able to change the Trump administration's hateful rhetoric or shortsighted policies overnight, but we can and we should pass the Dream Act as soon as possible. That is why we need more Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle ready to roll up their sleeves and get this done. Because every single day that Republican leaders refuse to bring the Dream Act to the floor to a vote, another 122 young people lose their DACA status, they lose their ability to work legally, and they lose their protection from deportation. That means that every day, 122 of our neighbors, students, coworkers, and friends could be forced from the only country they know, despite the promise the Federal Government made to them when they signed up for DACA and despite their innumerable contributions to our schools, our hospitals, our universities, our stores, our farms, our churches, our offices, and so much more. That means small and large businesses are forced to lay off DACA recipients each day—vital employees in whom businesses have invested money to train and support, employees who

help our economy and the small businesses in my State grow.

My friends on the other side of the aisle are constantly claiming they want to help our small businesses grow. I listened to weeks of their speeches on this as they tried to justify the tax bill. But instead of a giveaway to the wealthiest 1 percent, one way my friends across the aisle could actually help small businesses is to bring the Dream Act up for a vote.

This morning, I had the great honor of sitting down with Dreamers who traveled all the way here from my State across the Nation to fight for action, young people who had no control over how they came to this country but who have made conscious choices to improve their own lives and make life better for their own community. They are passionate, they are frustrated, and their stories need to be heard.

Here is just one of them. Paul was brought here to this country at the age of 7 to be reunited with his father. Paul excelled in schools in Pasco, WA, not far from where my own dad grew up. Paul and his parents worried that despite Paul's success in K-12, going to college and starting a career might be impossible. But DACA provided him and his family with stability. Paul went to Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA, as a double major in political science and economics, and he now works in our State legislature.

Now, with DACA in question, it is not just Paul who isn't sure what comes next for him but also his younger brother, Jose. Jose, who was only 2 years old when he came here, grew up seeing what Paul, his older brother, was able to achieve. He saw that DACA allowed Paul to live without that constant fear. Jose was ready to follow in Paul's footsteps and enroll in the DACA Program so he could pursue his dream of an engineering degree at the University of Washington. Now, if Congress doesn't act, we will have one less engineer in this country.

Paul and Jose are great examples of Dreamers who have worked hard. They have aimed high, and they participate in our community and our economy, making our country a better place. This country should be rolling out the welcome mat to our Dreamers, not slamming the door shut on them. And that is why I am here today with my colleagues to echo their fear and frustration on the floor of the Senate and to call on Republican leaders to work with us. Stop letting so many promising young men and women fall off the rolls of this program each and every day. Stop kicking this can down the road. Come together to do what is right for these young people.

Ending the DACA Program is not what our country is all about. It doesn't do anything to fix our immigration system, prepare for our future, or grow our economy. Ending DACA won't heal the divisions we have seen in our communities or make them any easier to fix. And ending the DACA

Program certainly doesn't reflect a country of opportunity or promise—something the United States has always aspired to be.

I urge my colleagues here in the Senate and over in the House to think about the communities you represent. Think about the young men and women who are currently studying for finals or caring for our sick or teaching our children or responding to natural disasters or opening businesses in the communities you travel to and live in. Think about the young men and women who hope to serve in our military and defend your freedom some day. Think of the Dreamers who have grown up in our country and whose children are the future of our Nation. Think about how much good we could do for these young men and women if my Republican friends brought the same commitment and zeal to this task as they did to their tax bill. Finally, work with Democrats to find a real solution to end this unnecessary uncertainty.

I want to thank Paul and all the other advocates from my State whom I met with in my office this morning and the many thousands of others who are showing up in every way they can to make their voices heard and to call on us here in Congress to act. Dr. Martin Luther King once said that justice too long delayed is justice denied, and Dreamers are not asking for anything other than what we have promised to them.

This is an incredibly difficult and uncertain time for so many people, but Dreamers need to know that many of us in Congress and so many across the country have their backs. We will get this done. We have to get this done.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, just yesterday, the Republican-controlled Congress passed a massive tax giveaway that will shovel truckloads of money into pockets of giant corporations and the superrich, while it leaves working families behind. And that is just the latest in a laundry list of presents that have been doled out to folks at the top. For everyone else, it has been one broken promise after another.

One of those promises was to protect 800,000 Dreamers who were brought to the United States as kids. Trump broke this promise when he ended DACA, the program that allows Dreamers to live, work, and study in the United States without fear of being deported to countries they barely know. Because Trump broke his promise, it is up to Congress to stand up and protect Dreamers by passing a clean Dream Act—a bill that gives legal status and a path of citizenship to those young people.

I want to introduce you to one of those Dreamers—Elias Rosenfeld. Elias was 6 years old when his parents brought him and his sister to the United States. He doesn't have many

memories of his life in Venezuela, but he did hear stories from his parents and his grandfather about the everyday risks that they faced. One day, while his mother was driving, she pulled up to a stop light, and a man pulled a gun on her. Another day, his grandfather withdrew money from an ATM and then was robbed at gunpoint.

So when Elias's mother, who was an executive at a multimedia company, had an opportunity to transfer to an office in Miami, FL, she jumped at it. Elias's family came to the United States legally. They applied for and they received a visa that allows executives and managers from other countries to work in the United States and eventually apply for permanent resident status. Under that visa, the entire family would become permanent residents and would never have to worry about losing their status in the United States. "Permanent" is the key word here. Well, at least that had been their plan, only things didn't go the way they had been planned.

When Elias was 11, his mother died of cancer. He didn't know it at the time, but the day his mother died, Elias and his family lost their path to permanent resident status and became undocumented.

After his mother died, Elias clung to the belief that an education was his ticket to a better life. He challenged himself academically, taking 13 advanced placement courses and earning A's in almost every class. He also juggled a number of extracurricular activities, including speech and debate, student government, volunteering with children and the homeless, and starting his school's first traveling Model United Nations. His excellence earned him a place on the dean's list, as well as a long list of awards, including the Miami-Dade Homeless Trust Change Maker Award.

Elias so impressed the school's staff that his high school activities director called Elias a hero and said: "I've been teaching for 20 years and I have never seen a student like this young man." Scholarship committees also recognized Elias's accomplishments, and he won a coveted Myra Kraft Transitional Year Program scholarship, which provided him a full ride to Brandeis University in Waltham, MA. He is now a sophomore at Brandeis, where he continues to make his mark.

Before DACA came along, Elias lived in constant fear that ICE would break down his door and deport him and his sister. DACA changed his life. The fear subsided. He knew that ICE agents wouldn't break down his door or seize him on his way to school. Elias told me that DACA has been a source of optimism and a light of protection.

America is the only country Elias knows. It is the only country many Dreamers know. This is their home. Dreamers like Elias have had the courage to step forward. They have come out of the shadows to tell their stories. Now Congress could show some courage

and protect Dreamers by passing a clean Dream Act. We have waited too long already. Every day that we delay, more than 100 Dreamers lose protected status. They must return to the shadows. They must think about ICE agents breaking down their doors or seizing them if they go to school or to work. The time for Congress to act is now, right now, today. We should not leave here so that we can celebrate the holidays with our families while nearly 800,000 Dreamers fear being ripped apart from their brothers, their sisters, their mothers, their fathers, and deported to countries they barely know.

If we held a vote today on the Dream Act, it would pass. So my question to Senator MCCONNELL is this: What are you waiting for? Let us vote.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I also rise to advocate the passage of a clean Dream Act now.

I had a youngster say to me—and I am going to tell the stories of a few of the youngsters—at an event in November, a Dreamer in Northern Virginia: "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one." It is a beautiful line, as we know, from the song "Imagine" by John Lennon. "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one."

There are 800,000 Dreamers in this country—more than 800,000. More than 13,000 of the Dreamers live in Virginia, and they are from all corners of the world. I have met with Dreamers in Virginia who were originally born in Sweden, Nigeria, Latin America, many countries in Asia. They are a rainbow but also a source of strength for our country, and we need to act on their behalf.

I also stand here in the Christmas spirit. We will all, so many of us, hear the retelling of the Christmas story. In the aftermath of the birth of the poor child in a manger, the story goes that he was taken by his parents to another country essentially as a refugee. There were threats of violence against the firstborn children of the land, and so he was spirited across a border into Egypt to be protected.

I know many of these Dreamers, and I know so many like them. I worked as a missionary in Honduras in 1980 and 1981, and I had the opportunity to work with youngsters in a country that was then and still is beset with violence and poverty and where so many parents have to make an agonizing choice. In some instances, they make the choice to try to find a better land for their children, just as Jesus and Mary did as they fled to Egypt at the Christmas season more than 2,000 years ago.

So I stand here in that moment, in that spirit, knowing that hundreds of thousands of Dreamers need our protection and, frankly, deserve it. Are we less compassionate than those societies of old that have found refuge for those who have come fleeing hardship? I

don't believe we are. I know the American public isn't, and I know the Virginia public isn't. The question is, Is Congress as compassionate as we need to be?

We tell the story of some of the Dreamers in Virginia, and I have made many speeches on this floor and told many of their stories.

Juan de la Rosa is a DACA recipient—one of our 13,500. He is a Richmonder. I first came to know Juan when I was the mayor of Richmond. He arrived at age 5. In a comment to me, he said: In one way or another, you have always been an active part of teaching me how being involved in the political process is the key toward positive change.

He started when he arrived here at 5 years old, and he excelled immediately. He went to Manchester High School in Chesterfield County and graduated in 2014. He was a drum major in the marching band, class representative, and a president of several honor societies.

After graduating at the top of his class at this very competitive suburban high school, he continued at Virginia Tech. At Virginia Tech, he started Tech DREAMers, which is a student organization there trying to create a more inclusive environment for the Dreamers on the campus. Through Tech DREAMers, he hosted dialogues around immigration reform and other issues—not just with Hokies but with students all around Virginia and around the country.

This past May, Juan de la Rosa graduated magna cum laude from Virginia Tech, and he continues to be active. He works in the admissions office as a Dreamer, traveling the country and telling students all over this country about the opportunity that was offered by this great university in the Commonwealth. He says: “All of this would not have been possible, had it not been for the opportunities afforded me because of DACA.”

Juan, like so many other undocumented young people, is the very embodiment of the Virginia Tech motto. The motto of Virginia Tech University is “Ut Prosim,” Latin for “That I May Serve.” That is what Juan is doing. He wants Congress to pass a clean Dream Act now so there is a permanent solution for him and so many others.

Alejandro Zuniga is the internal president of DREAMers Empowered at Northern Virginia Community College. I sat down with him a few weeks ago at a roundtable I held with these Dreamers. He was from Bolivia. He lived there until he was 7. His parents brought him here. He was not fully aware of what it was to be undocumented until he was ready to go to college, and his parents explained it to him. His favorite thing as a kid growing up in the DC area was to go to the Air and Space Museum. Now he is at Northern Virginia Community College making honor grades, studying to be an aerospace engineer.

Monday, I sat down at the Richmond Public Library with a group of Dream-

ers from the Richmond area. A few stopped by my office on a day I wasn't there and asked for a meeting. We sat down together. Let me tell you about some of them and some of their parents.

Mateo is a Dreamer and sophomore at VCU. He went to the same high school my daughter went to. My daughter Annella graduated from the Governor's School in Petersburg in 2013. Mateo was a freshman, and he graduated in 2016. He is part of a group called UndocuRams, a student organization whose mission is to foster inclusion for Dreamers on the VCU campus.

Mateo's mom came with him to the meeting to show her support for her son. She is heartbroken seeing him work so hard and so afraid of what might happen to him and so afraid of what might happen to her. She prays that this system may find a just result for her child and for herself.

Finally, at the same meeting, I had Bertha. Bertha is both a Dreamer and a mom. She is a young mother. Her parents brought her here in 1998 from Mexico as a young child. She is an exceptional member of her community. She works in a local Catholic Church, volunteers with the PTA at her children's school, and coaches her children's and other children's soccer teams. Bertha told me she has learned the values of volunteering and helping others from being here in the United States. This is an interesting one. I hadn't heard this before. Bertha told me that where she came from in Mexico, there wasn't a great tradition of volunteer organizations. There was sort of the government, and there were churches. She said, coming to the United States, she has become aware of a whole sector of society that was not familiar to her: volunteer organizations—groups of people who get together to try to tutor other kids to be Big Brothers or Big Sisters.

She said what she has learned from the United States, more than anything else, is this amazing power of volunteerism and the network of social service groups that are run by volunteers. She said: I want to be just like that—and that is what she is doing.

Why would we want to lose a mother, a Dreamer like Bertha from our community? She has explained, as so many have—folks here on the Hill engaged in rallies have explained with tears in their eyes the fear they feel. They had a President, who, though he said some tough things about immigrants during the campaign, he always said about Dreamers: Dreamers will have nothing to worry about in me. These Dreamers are good kids. They were taken by complete surprise when, in September, the President announced he would terminate the DACA Program in 6 months. From that moment, it has been unrelenting fear for these young people and for their families.

The only thing in the President's announcement that I think we could probably all agree to is—even though I

was a strong supporter of President Obama's Executive action; firmly believed it was within his legal power—a statutory fix is better than an Executive action because an Executive action depends upon the temperament of the particular President; whereas, a statutory fix provides people with some permanence, some confidence, and some security, and that is what we are called to do.

Again, in the spirit of the Christmas season—and because I am seeing this particular Presiding Officer—I am reminded of a beautiful phrase of Pope Francis whom the Presiding Officer and I have talked about before. In a letter he issued on Ash Wednesday in 2015, he called on us to be “*islas de misericordia en el medio de un mar de indiferencia*”—islands of mercy in the middle of a sea of indifference. That is a powerful phrase. Let's be islands of mercy in the middle of a sea of indifference. It was interesting. He didn't say: In the middle of a sea of hatred, in the middle of a sea of prejudice. He could have said all of those things. What he said was: “in a sea of indifference.”

Surely, as we hear of the virtues and the dreams, the achievements and the accomplishments of these beautiful young people, we can call on our inner spirit to be merciful, rather than indifferent. That is my hope; that this body will do that by passing a clean Dream Act and accepting with open arms the wonderful gifts these young people bring to our communities.

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.

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

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

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise, once again today, to express my strong support for taking action on the Dream Act. I thank all the Dreamers who, in recent weeks, traveled from all across the country to Washington to make their voices heard.

Last month, I met with 50 Minnesotans, who traveled here by bus to show their support for the Dream Act. They took time away from their jobs, from their education, and from their families because this issue is so critical to them and to their loved ones.

I want to get this bill passed, and while I remain hopeful we will reach an agreement soon, I know this has real consequences with each and every day, as over 100 Dreamers lose their status per day.

We have already seen the harmful effects of the administration's decision to end DACA, and the situation will continue to get worse until we take action. For the eligible DACA recipients with statuses set to expire over the upcoming weeks, the uncertainty is unbelievably difficult.

These are people who were told previously by our government that they could stay. They registered with our government, and now, with each and every day, more and more of them are losing their status. Just since I spoke about this issue on the Senate floor last week, an estimated 800 additional Dreamers have lost their DACA status. In March, the number of Dreamers with expiring protections will increase to 1,000 a day if we have not found a solution by that time.

This is an issue where we should be able to find bipartisan consensus. Americans want us to protect Dreamers. In fact, one recent poll found that 86 percent of Americans support action to allow Dreamers to stay in the United States. The Dream Act, which my colleague Senator DURBIN has led in the Senate for 16 years now, is based on a simple principle: Dreamers who are brought to the United States as children, and only know this country as their home, should be given the opportunity to contribute to our Nation and become citizens.

These young people were brought here through no fault of their own. On average, when they came over, they were only about 6½ years old. Imagine being told that you have to go back to a country you have not stepped foot in since you were 6, where you may not know anyone or even speak the language.

To receive DACA status, all Dreamers have already passed background checks, paid fees, and met educational requirements. They already did this so they could stay in the United States and contribute to our communities across the country.

Dreamers are already contributing. More than 97 percent of these Dreamers, of the DACA recipients, are now in school or in the workforce. In fact, 72 percent of them currently in school are pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher. The American Medical Association has urged us to take action on this issue, noting our current shortage of physicians in the United States—something the Presiding Officer is aware of—and estimating that passing the Dream Act could add 5,400 physicians to the U.S. healthcare system in the coming decades. According to the American Association of Medical Colleges, more than 100 students with DACA status applied to medical school last year, and about 70 Dreamers are currently enrolled in medical school.

In Minnesota, our large refugee and immigrant community has contributed so much to the cultural and economic vitality of our State. We are proud to have big communities of Somali, Liberian, and Oromo populations, as well as the second largest Hmong population. In fact, we have the biggest population of Somalis in the country, the biggest population of Liberians, the biggest population of Oromos, and we are also proud to be the home of more than 6,000 Dreamers.

Ending DACA in my State, where the unemployment rate is hovering in the

3-percent range, would cost Minnesota more than \$376 million in annual revenue, let alone the immeasurable impact to families who may be ripped apart.

REMEMBERING JOSEPH MEDINA

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, last week on the Senate floor, I talked about how I have always tried to find examples of Dreamers so that the citizens in my State can understand what we are talking about when we talk about the fact that someone could be brought over to our country and not even realize it and have this Dreamer status.

I talked about Joseph Medina. He was a decorated Army veteran. He served in World War II. He lived in Minnesota. I am sad to say that he passed away last July at the ripe old age of 103 years old. There was a story about Joe in today's edition of our largest newspaper in Minnesota, honoring his contributions to our Nation during World War II and through his nearly a century as a proud and hard-working Minnesotan.

Joe lost both of his parents before he was 1 year old. He was brought to the United States from Mexico by his aunt when he was just 5, and he didn't find out that he was undocumented during his whole time growing up. When did he find out? When he tried to join the Army in World War II.

So what he did then, because he wasn't a citizen—back then, it was pretty simple; what they would do is have people go to Canada, especially if they lived in Minnesota, and that is how they would become citizens. So they sent Joe Medina to Canada for 1 day. I remember his telling me this story—that this is what they did during World War II when they wanted people to sign up and serve. He stayed in a hotel for 1 night, and he came back, and with the help of our military, he became a citizen.

He then served under General MacArthur in the Pacific. Then he came home, got married, had a son, and that son served in the Vietnam war.

Joe came to Washington, DC, with his son for the first and last time to see the World War II Memorial at age 99. I stood there by his side as he looked at the Minnesota part of that Memorial and thought of the people he knew who were no longer with us and thought of his service and how much he loved serving our country in World War II.

At his side, along with his own son who had served in Vietnam, were two Dreamers—two high school students who were in high school in the suburban part of the Twin Cities, and they also wanted to join the military. If I remember right, they wanted to join the Air Force. Do you know what? The way the rules were a few years ago, they weren't allowed to do that. Joseph Medina couldn't understand that because the proudest part of his life was serving in our military, serving despite

the fact that he was born in another country but lived almost his entire life—98 years of his 103 years—in America.

So I join with all those in my State in remembering Joseph Medina and honoring his service to our country as we continue to work toward finding a solution for the Dreamers in the Senate.

I note that we should also take action here at the end of the year, and we should be staying to get a number of priorities done, including a long-term reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program, dealing with the medical device tax, renewing funding for community health centers. There are so many things we need to do.

In closing, I just want to make clear that I stand with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have spoken out in support of the Dream Act. We need to pass this bill.

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

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

A RECAP OF THE YEAR AND AN OUTLINE OF THE CHALLENGES OF THE YEAR AHEAD

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, as I try to do every year, if time permits—this will be my seventh year in the U.S. Senate; sometimes our work here finishes in a different fashion, but if possible, I try to come on the last day of the legislative year and give a speech to kind of recap the year behind us and outline the challenges of the year ahead.

For me, it was, obviously, an eventful year, a productive one, and I believe it has been one for this Chamber, as well, in what is a unique political environment in which politics today is practiced and covered in ways we have never seen before—almost like entertainment. Nevertheless, it was a year that we got a lot of good things done, and I wanted to highlight some of them in the hope that this gives us momentum into the new year.

This has been my first experience with a new President—obviously, not just a new President but a new administration that brought with it a set of individuals in different positions, so I think for all of us it was a transition in that regard. It also was the beginning of a second term, which, at one time, I didn't know I was even going to pursue.

In arriving here earlier this year and getting to work, we slowly but surely got going on a number of key priorities that we had been working on for a very long time. The first one that happened

was the VA accountability bill. This was a bill that I had been working on for a number of years. It basically gave the Secretary of the VA the power to fire people at the VA who are not doing a good job. It is that simple. It is not anything more complicated than that. It made it easier to fire people who were not doing a good job. They still have due process to defend themselves.

For the better part of 3 years, there were a lot of objections to that proposal from the previous administration and some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. Then everything lined up this year. Senator TESTER and Senator ISAKSON, who are the ranking member and chairman of that committee, came onboard and really helped to push this and to move it forward. It passed in both Chambers and was signed into law by the President. This was a substantial achievement.

What is interesting about it is that because it was bipartisan, because there was cooperation, and because no one was fighting with anyone on it, it didn't get a lot of press coverage. But it happened, and people need to know about it.

Does it make the VA perfect? No. Are there still challenges that need to be confronted? Absolutely. This is something that has to do with accountability and the ability to get rid of people who were not doing a good job. It is something that, for years, could not get done because someone always objected and found a way to stop it. Then it came together with people working across the aisle to make it happen. Today, it is the law. Today, there are people who were not doing a good job who are no longer employed at the VA, thanks to this. That is an important thing that people need to know.

I always remind everyone that the overwhelming majority of people who work at the VA are doing a good job. The ones who are not are the ones we need to replace.

The year went on, and I had an opportunity to interface and interact with the National Security Council and with the White House on two foreign policy issues that didn't really require legislation but that I am grateful and excited about having the opportunity to help craft.

The first was the new direction on U.S. policy toward Cuba. The previous administration had basically changed our policies toward Cuba—opened it up to much fanfare and, quite frankly, a lot of editorial board excitement.

It was the enlightened position, apparently, to argue that doing more trade with Cuba was going to somehow help Cuba transition to a democracy. But after 2½ years, it has become apparent that this change has done nothing other than flow more dollars into the hands of that regime and help them in their efforts to normalize.

When President Trump was elected, one of the things he wanted to talk about was what we needed to do to change that relationship back to some-

thing that favored the Cuban people and not the Cuban regime. Those changes came about. They were announced earlier this year at an event in South Florida.

To cut to the chase, what it does is this: It says that people can still travel to Cuba. Americans can still go to Cuba as part of a group or as an individual going to support the Cuban people. But if you go to Cuba, whether off a cruise ship, an airplane, or if you are there in support of the Cuban people, you have to spend your money at places that are owned by Cubans—by everyday Cuban people—not by the Cuban military, which is trying to create a monopoly.

For the first time in the history of that tyranny, there is a U.S. policy that places individuals in Cuba—private individuals in Cuba—in a favored position in comparison to the military and the Castro government. I believe this law will slowly but surely pay dividends as it becomes abundantly clear to the small, independent, private sector in Cuba that the reason they are aren't growing—the reason they aren't attracting more customers—has nothing to do with U.S. policy. It is because their own government does not want to allow them to be able to grow their businesses.

The Cuban Government feels threatened by private business, No. 1, because they are Communists and, No. 2, because they don't want people in Cuba to be able to support themselves. They want people to be dependent upon them; that is how they control politically.

We will see what decision the Cuban Government makes in the months and years to come, but here it is abundantly clear that there are people—Americans—who, under our law, can travel to Cuba, can spend money in Cuba, and they will have to stay at an Airbnb or in a private home or even, if the Cuban Government allows it, a hotel that is owned by a private entity. Where they cannot stay is in places controlled by the Cuban military or companies controlled by the Cuban military.

The second foreign policy issue that we were able to get involved in is another tragedy in our hemisphere; that is, what is happening in Venezuela. To cut to the chase, we have a tyrant who is afraid that he won't get reelected. He lost control of the National Assembly, which is their legislative body. His name is Nicolas Maduro. So what does he do? He basically figures out a way to create an alternative Congress called the Constituent Assembly, basically modeled after the fraudulent Cuban constituent assembly-like model. What it basically does is it guarantees that certain sectors in society have seats of representation. Instead of seats in Congress by a district or state, they are represented by different sectors, like labor, electricians, you name it.

But here is the funny part about it: The only people who can run for it are

the people they allow to run for it, and they also get to count the votes. As you can imagine, that fraudulent Constituent Assembly basically votes 100 percent in favor of whatever he wants, literally with very little dissent. It is not democratically elected. Meanwhile, the legitimate, democratically elected Congress, to use terms that we use here, has basically been intimidated and stripped of their power. Maduro doesn't allow them to be paid anymore; they don't staff anymore; all sorts of things of that nature.

We encourage the President of the United States to pursue first individual sanctions. We encourage the President to grow the list of individuals in Venezuela who are sanctioned and no longer able to benefit from ill-found gains here in the United States and ultimately to prevent them from continuing to do something they have been doing for far too long.

For far too long, they have been stealing the oil from Venezuela. They are selling it in global markets at a discount. Then they use those—to use rough numbers, they take \$1 million worth of oil and sell it for half a million dollars. Then they will take some of that half a million dollars and use it to pay the interest on the debt they already owe. Then the rest of that cash, they use for themselves, and they sprinkle a little bit of it to some of the elites around them just to keep them loyal to the regime. Those are the mid-level or high-level military officials who decide, well, things aren't great in Venezuela, but at least my family is better off than everybody else because we are loyal to the regime.

The President moved to stop that. Today, U.S. entities can no longer trade in these fraudulent, illegal bonds that are stolen from the people of Venezuela. This is a tragic situation. This is not an embargo. This is not economic warfare, which is what Maduro calls it. This, basically, is preventing them from continuing to steal.

I would add one more point to this. I encourage every one of you, if you can, to read an article in the New York Times that appeared last weekend, a pretty extensive series on starvation. Children are literally starving to death in Venezuela. Venezuela is the richest country in the hemisphere, the richest country in South America, in terms of being one of the most oil-rich countries in the world. Venezuela is a nation with a long history of stable economics and even the longest democratic tradition in South America. There are children starving. We see images that we normally associate with other continents at other times in our history—children starving to death in Venezuela. Meanwhile, he looks as though he weighs more than he ever has before, and all the people who surround him in his government are heavier, fatter than they have ever been before. People are starving because of that. It is not because of U.S. policy. It is not because of sanctions. There is no one in

the world, other than his handful of cronies, who would argue that it has anything to do with sanctions. It is because of them, because in addition to being incompetent, they are criminals.

The Venezuelan Government, from the top down and everywhere in between, is filled with narcotraffickers, with people who allow narcotraffickers from Mexico and from Colombia to fly into and use airports in Venezuela to traffic drugs. Just imagine for a moment, in this country, if our elected officials said to certain drug dealers: If you pay us, not only will the DEA not stop you from trafficking in drugs, but they will help you move it. That is what happens in Venezuela. Imagine for a moment if the Department of Defense went to drug dealers and said: If you pay us, not only will we allow your planes to fly, we will tell you what time to take off and we will escort you in our airspace. That is Venezuela—state-sponsored narcotrafficking at every level.

By the way, they offer another service. If you don't pay them, they will tell you: Don't worry, we will arrest the rival drug dealer, but we will protect the ones who pay us.

There are some very wealthy people in that government. In addition to corruption and stealing from the people of Venezuela, they are narcotraffickers. The Vice President of Venezuela is a narcotrafficker, sanctioned by the United States as a drug kingpin, and it goes on from there. The Vice President of the party, who controls their intelligence services—a thug by the name of Diosdado Cabello—is a drug trafficker. The nephews of the President of Venezuela, the nephews of his wife, the First Lady, were just convicted and sentenced last week, in a court in New York, for drug trafficking. By the way, in their testimony, it is all filled with evidence.

I hope in the new year that we can find a way to continue to support the brave people of Venezuela and a better way forward. We would hope, by the way, that even in the Venezuelan Government, even in that fraudulent Constituent Assembly, we would hope that there are people there, like Hugo Chavez, who believed in the stuff he believed in—but they would have to see that this is a disaster, that this incompetent man is destroying their country and starving their children, and that there is no future in the direction they are headed. We hope this situation improves in the years to come.

Senator CARDIN was on the floor yesterday discussing this, and I want to reiterate that I hope that early next year, we can move on a bill that we introduced together called the Venezuelan Humanitarian Assistance and Defense of Democratic Governance Act of 2017. This helps address this problem. It puts in place a plan to help with this humanitarian crisis. We need a government that allows us to do it. But knowing that the United States, working with Canada, Mexico, Argentina,

Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Spain, and the European Union—knowing that these countries are ready to step in and help might be an incentive for decent people still left in that government to step forward and begin a process of transition.

It was an interesting year, and one more legislative initiative that we took on was the RACE for Children. It is a pediatric cancer initiative. There are not enough innovations in pediatric cancer when you compare it to adult cancer. This law requires pharmaceuticals to begin testing adult drugs on pediatric populations so that hopefully we can develop more pediatric medicines. I worked on that with Senator BENNET of Colorado. We got it passed and signed into law. Again, it is not something that got a lot of attention because it was bipartisan and not controversial, but it is important. We are proud of the good work we accomplished this year in that regard.

We had hurricanes that impacted Florida not once but twice, first Hurricane Irma and then Hurricane Maria, which struck Puerto Rico and had an impact on Florida as well. Approximately 200,000 U.S. citizens from Puerto Rico have moved to Florida because there is no electricity, because the island had already been hit previously, and because it is facing a financial disaster, and now it got hit by the storm. We were very involved in helping there. In particular, we worked with Resident Commissioner Jenniffer Gonzalez, who is a true and dedicated public servant to the people of Puerto Rico, No. 1, in getting the right response. It took a little too long for the response to get going, but it finally started moving. But there is still so much to be done. The estimates are that it will be another 8 months before power is restored.

A disaster like that is never good news, but for the first time at least in 7 years, I feel as though my colleagues know more about Puerto Rico than ever before. They understand the challenges it faces because of its unique status. They understand the pre-existing challenges it faced before the storm, and they understand what lies ahead.

I don't mean this disrespectfully, but there was a time when people sometimes would talk to me about Puerto Rico as though it were a foreign country. We have to remind them that these are U.S. citizens. On a per capita basis, they volunteer to serve in the Armed Forces as much as or more than anyone else in the United States.

I hope that in the year to come we will redouble our efforts, particularly in disaster relief, to ensure that Puerto Rico doesn't just recover but is rebuilt stronger than ever so that we don't have to continue to revisit this in the future when the inevitable happens, because they will face a storm again.

Of course, just a few days ago, we passed tax reform. Not everybody likes it, but I think more people will as they

start to see its true implications. By March of this year, the overwhelming majority of Americans are going to notice that their paychecks are bigger than they were a year ago, and if they didn't get a raise, it will be solely based on tax reform. If I were king for a day, the law would look a little different. But we don't have kings in America; we have a constitutional republic in which making things better is our goal. Sometimes if you get 70 or 80 percent of what you want, that is certainly a victory. Sometimes if you get 50 percent of what you want, that is a victory. Most change in America happens incrementally through our constitutional republic. Every now and then, we can take major steps forward.

Here is the bottom line: America's Tax Code today is better than it was before this bill passed. Do I think we went a little too far in the direction of multinational corporations? Perhaps—not that it is going to hurt the economy. But I thought some of that could have been geared toward working families through a further expansion of the child tax credit. But over all, I do believe it will help grow our economy, and more importantly, I do believe it will leave more money in the hands of Americans to be able to spend it on their families. It is their money. It is not ours.

The best way to look at it is, if I came here and said that I wanted to spend \$2 trillion over the next 10 years—borrowed money—to give it to the government so the government could stimulate the economy, there would be a lot of support from the other side of the aisle and from the press. They would call it genius and enlightened for a Republican to think that way. But if we say we want to leave \$1.5 to \$2 trillion in the hands of the American people and the private sector so they can stimulate the economy instead, it is a disaster and it is irresponsible. It is just a philosophical difference of opinion.

There is a role for government. We must fund it. We have to rebuild our military. We talked about disaster relief. There are important things for government to do. But by and large, a dollar spent by the private sector or by an individual family is going to generate more growth than a dollar spent by the government. We fund government not to grow the economy but to help sustain it and protect it and keep us safe and the food that we eat and the airplanes we travel on and certainly from threats foreign and domestic. Economic growth is a function of the private sector and of individuals, and tax reform helps to achieve it. That alone won't be enough.

One of the singular challenges in America today that we must confront in the new year, hopefully, is the skills gap. It is not just a throwaway phrase; it is the fact that the best paying jobs, the ones that actually pay enough to raise a family and save for retirement—those jobs require skills that

our schools aren't teaching. Those jobs require skills that millions of Americans do not have. We have to change that. We have to make it easier not just to graduate people at 18 years of age ready to work, we have to make it easier for people at 45 to be able to go back to some sort of school and acquire the skills they need for a better paying job. That will lead to economic growth. That will help fill the 2 million to 3 million unfilled jobs that we cannot find people in this country with the right skills to fill. That is how people get a raise as a part of economic growth, and I hope the new year provides an opportunity for that.

I would add that, in addition to that, the new year will provide us an opportunity to focus on infrastructure, which is critical. My State of Florida is particularly impacted by not just storms but sea level rise in coastal areas, and there are things we can do to mitigate against it. We need to restore the Everglades, and, of course, we need roads and bridges and to improve our infrastructure and airports. Hopefully, we can confront that as we work on infrastructure.

Mr. President, 2018 will be a year that we will deal with the farm bill. I hope action will be taken to reform crop insurance, to ensure that my State's farmers are never in the position they were put in after Hurricane Irma, with neither a reliable safety net, nor a reliable commitment from the Federal Government to step in when Federal programs fail to meet disaster needs.

Next year could be a water resources year, a water year. Again, it is an opportunity for us to do critical things for our infrastructure. In Florida, beach renourishment and intercoastal navigation projects are important not just to our way of life but to our tourism industry. There are harbor dredging projects with the expansion of the Panama Canal. It is important that these things get done next year. They won't get as much controversy or fanfare, but these are critical things that we can do.

Another opportunity next year that we have heard some talk about is the ability to reform the social safety net. On that front, I would say that is an issue that I have pushed for for a very long time. But sometimes when you talk about reform, people think you are coming at it because you want to cut. For me, it is not so much about cutting; it is about improving the way we deliver the same services. How can we use the money we are already spending in the safety net but in a better way?

I believe in the safety net. I actually don't believe free enterprise works unless we have one. People are not going to take risks, people are not going to strive if they think that if they fail, the consequences will be economic devastation. You have to have a safety net to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves—the permanently

disabled, the elderly and the like—but you also have to have a safety net for people who have come upon tough times until they can get back on their feet and try again.

But I fear—in fact, I realized long ago—that our safety net programs treat the symptoms of poverty, but they do not cure it. That is why I hope that if and when we tackle the social safety net—and I hope we will in 2018—it will not be so much about cutting as it will be about reorganizing and improving. Yes, we will take care of people in their emergent and immediate needs. But we will also make it easier for you to go back to school and get a degree or a technical certification so that you can find a job and never again rely on the government. If we do that for enough people, it will save us money because fewer people will be on the social safety net. But that should not be the reason we tackle it—not as a cost-saving exercise, but as a way to lift up more Americans.

We are in a global competition, and our chief geopolitical competitor in the economic space in the 21st century will be China. China has over three times as many people as we do, and we have to compete against them. They have 1 billion, and we have 380 million or 400 million people. We are competing against an economy with three times as many people. We need everyone. We are not a nation that can afford economically to leave anyone behind, and we are a nation in which leaving anyone behind would be a betrayal of our founding principles. That is why I hope we will tackle it next year—if we tackle the social safety net—with job training programs.

In a few moments, the Senate will hopefully take up and vote on the continuing resolution. I know everyone is anxious to return to their States and homes for the holiday. I will say that I am disappointed we are leaving here at the end of this year not having taken on a disaster relief bill that I know the people in Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico, and—with the wildfires—out West need. I believe we will confront it in the early part of next year, along with a permanent extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program and other matters.

Next year will bring an opportunity, as well, to deal with things like immigration security, the opportunity to deal with young people brought to this country, through no fault of their own, by their parents who now find themselves here, illegally, in the country. I believe there is a real chance next year to provide them certainty and the ability to stay in this country for the future.

All these things are there, and they will happen in the early part of the year. But, at least when it comes to disaster relief, it is disappointing that we won't be able to do that—largely for legislative strategic reasons, not for policy ones. But I am confident we will deal with it in the early part of next year.

I actually think that in 2018, despite it being an election year, if we allow the momentum that closed out this year to carry over to the new one, we will have a chance to do good things for our country.

In the end, given our differences that exist in this country today, it is hard to imagine we will ever always agree that every idea is a good one, but I hope we can all agree that our job here is to make things better. Sometimes making things better means 1 step forward, and sometimes it means 50 steps forward. But as long as we are moving forward in a pattern of perpetual improvement, I think we should be proud of the work we are doing.

I think, by and large, in 2017, despite the fits and starts, despite the controversies, despite the headlines every morning about the outrage of the day or questions in the afternoon that usually begin with "How did you feel about the tweet on this or on that?"—despite all those distractions, I think 2017 will go down as a year of consequential improvement, where things happened in this Chamber and in this city that made America better, not worse. On that, I hope we can continue to work.

I wish all the people of Florida, all my colleagues, all the people of this great country and around the world a happy Hanukkah, a merry Christmas, and a happy New Year. I look forward to working together and making things better in the year to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. REED. Mr. President, yesterday, we saw a very unusual celebration at the White House as Members of Congress took turns exalting the President and speaking in glowing terms about the tax bill they had passed. There appeared to be quite a contrast between the celebration at the White House and the reaction by working Americans.

Why weren't working middle-class Americans celebrating so vigorously? Why does poll after poll find that this is the most unpopular tax bill since the 1980s, in fact, including tax hikes by Presidents George Herbert Walker Bush and President Bill Clinton? This bill is even less popular than those tax increases.

Speaker RYAN seems to think the Republican tax bill is unpopular because Americans don't know what is in it. He is wrong. The American people are smart. They get it. They don't like this tax bill because they do know what is in it: lots of goodies for President Trump and his family and very little for theirs.

This tax bill isn't popular with working people because they know that if Republicans really wanted to give them a tax break, Republicans would have given it to them directly and not to corporate executives. Middle-class

Americans remember the corporate excesses that led us to the terrible losses of the great recession. They sacrificed and worked hard to help the economy recover. They remember the tough choices we had to make in order to get our economy working again, and they don't want to see that progress turned back. But the recovered economy President Trump inherited from President Obama is in danger of backsliding under this trickle-down approach, with Republicans once again breaking the Federal bank to give huge tax breaks to the wealthy.

Middle-class Americans weren't popping champagne bottles yesterday because they know that they will be on the hook again when reality sets in on the massive deficits and irresponsible excesses of the Trump economy. The real economy isn't a chart or a graph to them; it is their ability to put food on the table, send their children to college, and plan for retirement. Republican economics have not historically worked out well for them. The economy created over 11 times as many jobs under President Clinton as it did under President George Herbert Walker Bush. It created over 10 times as many jobs under President Obama as President George W. Bush. Today, U.S. job openings are nearing all-time highs and 15 million Americans have gained employment since 2010.

We have much, much more work to do to address issues like underemployment, labor force participation, and wage growth, but the economy Republicans are gambling with today is one that middle-class families worked hard and sacrificed to create. Moreover, middle-class Americans are not easily fooled when it comes to their bottom line. It will take more than focus groups and political publicity stunts to convince them that this Republican bill was written with their interests in mind.

Many Americans opened their paper this morning to read that major corporations like Wells Fargo and others were boosting U.S. investment or providing bonuses in the wake of the huge tax breaks provided to them by the Republican legislation. It is certainly a good thing that many of these companies are considering greater investments in their American workforce, but the relationship between these tax breaks and higher pay or bonuses seems to fall apart under scrutiny. Some companies, like Wells Fargo, have already admitted that these pay raises were preplanned and not the direct result of the tax bill. Indeed, this coordinated announcement appears more intended to appeal to the Trump administration than to prove anything about the effectiveness of the Republican tax bill for American workers.

Moreover, it appears the real problem many Americans have with the Republican bill is that they believe it will balloon the public debt in order to disproportionately benefit the rich. Based on every credible analysis of the bill to

date, they are very likely correct. So, rather than watch for publicity stunts, Americans should, in the coming weeks, watch how much corporate executives take in bonuses. They should look at the more than \$70 billion in share buybacks that major corporations have announced since the Senate passed the Republican tax bill. Once corporations got the clear signal that this legislation would likely pass, their reaction was not to raise wages, not to stabilize the pension funds, but to buy back their shares, which is a double benefit for the managers of these companies and for the shareholders.

First, it typically raises the price of the stock on the market, which makes the value go up and gives direct benefits to shareholders. For the managers, most or much of their pay is related to their shareholdings. By the way, they are usually incentivized to increase share price, so their other pay is increased. So it is no surprise that this is the reaction of most corporations. It is quite telling that some company executives have made it clear that their plan for the funds released by this tax bill will be devoted to share buybacks. It is, in fact, ironic because many of these companies were having to pay an effective tax rate of less than 10 percent, much less than the new statutory rate. Does that mean they are going to give even higher wages? If a company was paying an effective tax rate of 8 percent and wasn't significantly raising the wages of their workforce, what does the new statutory rate of 21 percent do to their incentive? Nothing at all.

Americans can and will also consider the fact that 35 percent of American company stock is owned by foreign nationals, who are projected to pocket a \$48 billion windfall by 2019 as a result of corporate tax breaks. Yes, this tax bill will incentivize corporations to buy back stock, a significant amount of which is owned by foreign entities, individuals, and corporations. So \$48 billion of these funds will go overseas; it won't be devoted to salary increases, wage increases, R&D; it won't even be devoted in some sense to the United States because it will flow overseas.

They should ask: In light of these historically huge gains for the corporate investor class, how many of these corporations will make sure their pension funds, for example, are fully funded? There is no requirement that would prevent a company from buying back stock even while its pension fund is not actuarially sound. That has happened in the past. That is likely to happen in the future. So you have to ask yourself, as working families are: If I have a company that is giving its shareholders and management huge benefits, and my pension is questionable—it is not fully funded—is that right? I think the answer is, honestly: No, that is wrong.

How many companies will ship jobs overseas because they will see a financial advantage? In fact, corporate ex-

ecutives will feel a fiduciary duty to the shareholders to do that. How many companies will continue to replace their workers with contractors who may have no healthcare from the company and no pension benefits? Jobs that could be filled and were filled in the past by real employees with real benefits will now be shipped away from the company to contractors.

I supported efforts by several of my Democratic colleagues to place conditions on these massive corporate tax breaks so that there would be at least some requirement that American workers share in this multitrillion dollar giveaway, but all of these proposals were rejected by our Republican colleagues. I believe they will have to explain to the working men and women of America why shareholders are getting huge benefits and they don't have a fully sound pension fund. Why are additional Americans being laid off by these corporations at the same time they are providing huge buybacks of their stocks to their shareholders? These are a series of questions I think American working families and the middle-class will continue to ask.

They are already aware this bill was not designed for them. It was designed for the wealthiest corporations and the wealthiest individuals in America and, indeed, globally. When the evidence mounts, it will further confirm those views. I think they are very, very accurate.

I know Americans will continue to work hard. They will continue to try to build this economy. But with the passage of this bill, this is clearly now President Trump's economy. All of the sacrifice and effort to build jobs under President Obama, which cut the unemployment rate from double digits down to 4.5 and 5 percent—all those could be jeopardized by what has transpired here, and the President owns it.

As we go forward, I think we have to realize this legislation is not going to help working families.

I have heard my colleagues, very sincerely and very eloquently, talk about some of the challenges we face, like job training. We are facing a situation in which many experts predict that within the next 12 years—by 2030—we will lose one-third of the jobs in the United States. They will go away because of technology and because of artificial intelligence. What is going to happen to the 30- or 40-year-old working man or woman? What does one do when a job he or she has prepared well for, and done very well, is suddenly taken over by a machine? Will one turn to private corporations and ask, please, help me?

I know what the answer will be: Not our responsibility. We only have an obligation to our shareholders—to enrich them. That is all we do. Thank you very much.

They will turn to the government. What will we do? We will say: We are sorry. We are already \$1.5 trillion in the hole. Because of the tax bill, we can't afford any job training, career

transition, long-term unemployment sustainment, which we will need to allow people to make this transition. Oh, by the way, as to those retirement benefits that are under huge pressure, we cannot help you. We have the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, but that is so underwater. Sorry.

By the way, with natural phenomena—the floods that are coming—we are currently talking about a disaster relief bill. In this Chamber, we are all aware that our National Flood Insurance Program is in a deep hole. It is—no pun intended—underwater. Where are we going to get this money to pay for the obligations we have already put on our books for the National Flood Insurance Program? What are the cities and communities going to do when we say we don't have it anymore, that we gave the money away?

We are now facing very difficult situations—we know they are coming—with unavoidable costs. There is our national defense. We have to rebuild our nuclear triad, our submarines, our bomber fleets, our land-based systems. Over several years, that will be hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars. We know we have to do it.

Instead of doing that, yesterday, we decided to give \$1.5 trillion or more in deficit spending to the wealthiest Americans and the wealthiest corporations. I don't think it makes good sense. I think working Americans and middle-class Americans understand that very well—in fact, better than we do, collectively. What they have done, essentially, and what they are saying to anyone who would ask is, this is a terrible piece of legislation. Why did Congress pass it?

That is a question that will reverberate throughout this year and next year and, unfortunately, I think, for a long time because it will take us time and effort and sacrifice and tough votes, as we had in the nineties and again in 2009 and beyond, to get back on track for working families.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUNT). The Senator from South Dakota.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— EXECUTIVE CALENDAR NO. 261

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I rise to voice my strong support for the nomination of Ronald Batory to be the Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration at the Department of Transportation and to express my deep frustration that this noncontroversial, highly qualified nominee has been languishing in the Senate for over 4 months due to objections by a handful of Democrats over a parochial issue entirely unrelated to the nominee's qualifications.

The Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee held a hearing on his nomination on July 26, 2017, and reported his nomination favorably out of

committee with a unanimous voice vote on August 2, 2017. At that time, not a single Senator on the committee, Republican or Democrat, expressed any doubt about Mr. Batory's extensive expertise on rail safety issues.

Mr. Batory has over 45 years of experience in the railroad industry, in both management and operational positions, and he is a respected leader in driving organizational change and, most importantly, in advancing safety improvements. In fact, Railway Age called him noncontroversial and said: "He is the best-qualified person to be the Federal Railroad Administrator in a very long time, perhaps in the agency's history."

Yet, despite his unanimous approval from the committee, he has been blocked from assuming his leadership duties at this important safety regulatory agency. The FRA has critical safety decisions to make on a daily basis, and the agency needs strong strategic direction and management on time-sensitive safety issues. A senior adviser, which is Mr. Batory's current role at the DOT, does not have the same legal authority or ability to lead an agency as does a Senate-confirmed Administrator.

It is time to stop hamstringing Mr. Batory and get him confirmed so he can operate at full capacity. Unfortunately, it appears that we will not be able to do that without, once again, engaging in the cloture process on a noncontroversial nominee. This takes up valuable floor time that could be spent on other priorities. Yet it will, undoubtedly, still lead to his being confirmed by a large, bipartisan majority of the Senate. This pattern of obstruction—burning up a week or more of time to confirm two or three nominees who end up with overwhelming cloture and confirmation votes—must end.

The Batory nomination is also significant for another reason. Earlier this week, we saw the terrible tragedy of the Amtrak Cascades 501 derailment in Washington. Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers are with all of those affected, especially during this holiday season. As the NTSB continues its ongoing investigation, we will learn more about the causes of this derailment and the measures that might have prevented it.

To be clear, the tragic events of this week were not caused by a vacancy at the helm of the FRA, but the Senate must act now to install a leader at this agency to advance any safety solutions and oversight found to be needed as a result of the accident.

To date, much of the discussion surrounding this accident has been focused on positive train control or what we call PTC. While it is still early to know what, if any, impact PTC would have had on this accident, I could not agree more with the Democratic leader who earlier this week said: "We need Positive Train Control." He went on to say: "The Federal Department of Transportation is not pushing Federal PTC hard enough."

If he truly believes the DOT needs to do more, why is he, along with a few of his colleagues, standing in the way of Mr. Batory's nomination? After all, Congress has tasked the FRA Administrator with providing the oversight and strong push that will be needed to ensure railroads meet next year's December 31, 2018, deadline for full PTC installation and training.

Make no mistake, a strong push is what many passenger railroads need. According to the FRA's latest quarterly progress report for passenger railroads, only 50 percent of locomotives are equipped and PTC operable; 64 percent of required PTC radio towers are installed; and only 24 percent of required route miles are in operation.

The Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee expects to continue to play its role in conducting strong oversight of PTC implementation, including holding a hearing in 2018. However, what I do not expect the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee to do is to grant any further change to the PTC deadline framework that is established in current law. That is why we need Mr. Batory. When finally confirmed, he will play a significant role in pushing expeditious and successful PTC implementation.

This is not just the view of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, I might add, which, again, approved Mr. Batory, as I said earlier, unanimously, but also of the rail professionals who advance safety on the ground. The States for Passenger Rail Coalition, which consists of 25 State Departments of Transportation, wrote in July:

The issues facing the railroad industry today are significant, and it is vital that we have an experienced, capable and dedicated leader like Mr. Batory, who is willing to work with the states to make the improvements necessary to build a national rail system with an emphasis on increasing mobility and reliability, while enhancing safety and security now, and in the years to come.

Likewise, rail labor—representing conductors and communication workers—and other industry groups urged the Senate to proceed to Mr. Batory's nomination "as soon as possible," stressing "the importance of having Mr. Batory's expertise and leadership at the agency responsible for railroad safety."

That letter was written in September. It is now December. There is no reason for this delay.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that both of these letters be printed in the RECORD.

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

SEPTEMBER 15, 2017.

Senator MCCONNELL,
Senate Majority Leader,
Washington, DC.
Senator SCHUMER,
Senate Minority Leader,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPUBLICAN LEADER MCCONNELL AND DEMOCRATIC LEADER SCHUMER: As rail industry stakeholders, we write to support the nomination of Ronald Batory for Federal

Railroad Administrator. We urge the Senate to proceed to Mr. Batory's nomination as soon as possible.

Mr. Batory's nomination was announced in July, unanimously approved and reported by the Senate Commerce Committee in August, and now awaits action on the Senate floor. Mr. Batory is eminently qualified to be FRA Administrator and we believe he will have considerable bipartisan Member support once the Senate turns to his nomination.

We ask that his nomination be considered soon by the full Senate, in light of the importance of having Mr. Batory's expertise and leadership at the agency responsible for railroad safety.

Thank you for considering our views on this important matter.

Association of American Railroads (AAR); BNSF Railway; Canadian National Railway; Canadian Pacific Railway; CSX Transportation; Kansas City Southern Railroad; Norfolk Southern Railway; Union Pacific Railroad; American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA); International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART); Transportation Communications Union/IAM.

National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP); National Railroad Construction & Maintenance Association (NRC); Railway Engineering-Maintenance Suppliers Association (REMSA); Railway Supply Institute (RSI); States for Passenger Rail Coalition (SPRC); American Association of Private Railroad Car Owners (AAPRCO); AECOM; GE Transportation; Progress Rail Services; Siemens.

JULY 19, 2017.

Hon. JOHN THUNE,
Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. BILL NELSON,
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN THUNE AND RANKING MEMBER NELSON: On behalf of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition, Inc (SPRC), I write in support of the confirmation of Ronald L. Batory as Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT).

The SPRC's mission is to promote the research, development, implementation, operation, sustainability, and expansion of publicly supported intercity passenger rail services. On behalf of its membership representing 25 state departments of transportation and passenger rail authorities, SPRC advocates for ongoing federal funding and programmatic support for intercity passenger rail initiatives, including efforts to improve safety on our nation's rail system and at highway-rail at-grade crossings.

We are impressed with Mr. Batory's extensive experience in the railroad industry and appreciate his plan to improve communications within the agency, and we encourage him to collaborate closely with public and private stakeholders to achieve policy goals. We are especially encouraged by his reputation as a good listener with a sound analytical approach. We commend his affirmation of the need for the FRA to move to performance-based rulemaking and fact-based policy making. Focusing upon these two objectives will strengthen the role of the states in promoting the development of a safe, reliable and efficient vibrant national network of freight and passenger rail services.

We ask that the Committee act speedily to confirm Mr. Batory. The issues facing the railroad industry today are significant, and it is vital that we have an experienced, capa-

ble and dedicated leader like Mr. Batory, who is willing to work with the states to make the improvements necessary to build a national rail system with an emphasis on increasing mobility and reliability, while enhancing safety and security now, and in the years to come.

Sincerely,

PAUL C. WORLEY, *CPM, Chair,*
States for Passenger Rail Coalition, Inc.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we have had an immensely qualified leader, Ronald Batory, ready to lead an important safety agency for over 4 months. The time for playing political games with the leadership of this railroad safety agency should be over. It is long past time that my Democratic colleagues end the obstruction, and this body must confirm Ronald Batory.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar No. 261, Ronald Batory. I further ask that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCHUMER. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I am kind of beyond words to explain why we are objecting to someone who was unanimously approved out of the committee, is highly qualified, noncontroversial, and would run an incredibly important safety agency in this country. I just don't have words to explain what that objection might be.

I hope this is the last time the Democrats in the Senate will object to getting this important position filled with an individual who comes highly regarded, highly qualified, and has gone through the entire process—answered all of the questions through his confirmation—and is ready now for a final vote in the U.S. Senate, which would allow him to get the job and to get about the important work of ensuring that there is safety on the railroads in this country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

OPIOID CRISIS

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, at some point this evening, we expect the House of Representatives to send the Senate a bill that would keep the Federal Government open for another few weeks before our heading home for Christmas. For most families, the holidays are an opportunity to take a break away from our busy lives and enjoy time with the people we love. It is safe to say, however, that will not be the case for tens of thousands of American families who have lost a loved one this year due to a drug overdose.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released two important new reports this week. First, they found that life expectancy decreased in the United States for the second year in a row. Second, the likely cause of that decrease in 2016 is that over 63,000 people died of drug overdoses. That is more than 144 deaths per day, and it is a 21-percent increase from 2015.

This is a crisis. People are dying in communities across this country every single day. Congress must do much more to address this scourge. Here in Washington, we have talked at length about the massive size and scope of the problem.

Last year, we passed bipartisan legislation that was signed into law and is providing our local communities with more tools to fight the epidemic, and we approved initial funding to begin to support these and other efforts.

I was proud to help bring nearly \$11 million of that funding to Indiana. Earlier this fall, the President rightly declared the opioid abuse epidemic to be a nationwide public health emergency. On the frontlines, in places like my home State of Indiana, however, the battle is raging. Despite a unified response, there is more work to do.

Our Governor, Governor Holcomb, has made the fight against opioid abuse the priority it needs to be. He and his administration are working closely with local communities to provide resources and support. Together, we have engaged our healthcare providers—both public and private—the business community, our educators, and the clergy who are all committed to this cause. Yet the message I continue to hear from people on the ground is, we need more resources and we need to expand treatment capabilities as soon as possible.

We all know this is not a partisan issue. Over the last few years, I have been honored to work with seven of my Republican colleagues to introduce seven bills and amendments that address everything from prescribing practices to the shortage of addiction treatment professionals, and many of these ideas have already been signed into law.

I am partnering with my State's Republican Governor to make sure we do everything in our power to help those who are battling with addiction, but it is not enough unless we provide our communities with the resources they are asking for and they need.

This is the time of year that many Americans reflect on the year that has passed and identify the priorities in the years to come. In Congress, we need to do the same. More than 63,000 Americans died last year from opioid abuse. Those are 63,000 moms and dads, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, sons and daughters who are not with us this year. We must make this issue a priority.

I hope Congress will demonstrate to the American people that fighting the opioid epidemic is a priority. One way

to do that is to include meaningful resources in the bill to fund our Federal Government and key programs when we deal with this again before January 19 of next year.

I implore my colleagues to make this a priority, to provide the robust and meaningful funding our communities need to seriously address this problem. We are in the midst of a crisis. We must do more in 2018. We have families all across our Nation with broken hearts tonight for the ones they love and the ones they miss. Let's make sure there are no more in 2018; that this ends today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 5 minutes and that after I speak, Senator WYDEN be recognized.

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

EXTREME RHETORIC

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, 6 months ago, on a beautiful June morning, just a few miles from here in Alexandria, VA, a man with a gun opened fire on me and several of my Republican colleagues.

In the chaotic aftermath of that awful morning, the gunman's purpose slowly became clear. Because of our beliefs and our political affiliation, this individual believed my colleagues and I should die. Since that day, I struggled to understand this thinking. How could any American look onto a field that June morning, where a bunch of middle-aged men were playing baseball, and see the enemy?

Some of the bombastic rhetoric being offered this week in response to the tax reform bill has given me pause. If you listen to some of the hyperbolic vitriol that opponents of this bill are producing, the attitude that nearly killed my friend STEVE SCALISE and threatened many more lives begins to make a perverse kind of sense.

When respectable public figures go on television or take to Twitter and announce that thousands, if not millions, of Americans are going to die as a direct result of the passage of a tax reform bill, what impact do we expect this to have on the thinking of many Americans? If a person takes such outlandish statements as true, attacking Members of Congress in support of the measure almost appears to be a moral action. This could lead someone to believe that killing a few legislators might save the lives of millions of Americans.

Beyond the physical danger of promoting such misinformation, these claims do grave harm to the legislative process. How are we expected to work together to achieve anything if one side's position is viewed as the end of America as we know it? One of my colleagues called this tax reform bill "the worst bill in the history of Congress."

Upon the bill's passage, one media pundit went so far as to encourage

young Americans to flee their country and declared "America died tonight."

Full-throated and passionate debate should always be encouraged. We all love arguing the merits of supply-side economics, but this is not that. This is demonizing of the worst kind. It leaves us all in this body unable to engage in the kind of negotiations and compromise that Congress was created to foster.

To be clear, this is not a problem with one party or of one moment. During the public debate over the Affordable Care Act, Members of my party engaged in similar tactics. I was in the House Chamber when one of my Republican colleagues stood and yelled "You lie" at the President of the United States. The accusation that passage of healthcare reform legislation would result in so-called death panels was promoted far and wide by many Republicans. One conservative commentator suggested the government would begin educating seniors on how to end their own lives.

A Republican legislator claimed that the bill would put seniors in a position of being "put to death by their government." This rhetoric was wrong then, and it is wrong now.

The threat posed to all of us and to the democratic process for giving in to extreme rhetoric is not theoretical. Some of us faced it on that baseball field in Alexandria in June, and all of us have witnessed its corrosive effect on Congress. I urge my colleagues, all of us, let's end this practice where raw politics drowns out the supplications of the better angels of our nature. Let us all be more humble as to our predictive powers when it comes to placing a value on the work we do here. In reality, this legislation will probably not turn out to be as good as the proponents assert, nor as bad as the opponents contend.

The country is watching. It is my hope that we—all of us—can eschew contempt and vitriol in our speech and be more measured in our tone.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor tonight to discuss the Senate's investigation into Russia in the 2016 election. Specifically, I have been reviewing for months documents in the possession of the Senate's Intelligence Committee. I regret to say, the depth of the committee's investigation is completely unsatisfactory into the crucial issues of what I call following the money.

Early in 2017, I began asking the committee leadership to look into any and all financial relationships between Russia and Donald Trump and his associates. In an open hearing the committee held in March, I noted a number of public facts. First, there is an extraordinary history of money laun-

dering in Russia. Billions of dollars from corruption and other illegal activities have been moved out of the country. Second, the President's son said in 2008: "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets." Third, entities associated with the President had already been the subject of millions of dollars of fines for willful, repeated, and long-standing violations of anti-money laundering laws. Fourth, the Congress and the American people still haven't seen the President's tax returns.

Since then, there have been numerous additional press stories about associates of the President and their financial connections to Russia. In my view, these stories require thorough, detailed investigation. It is not just by the press. The special counsel's indictment against former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort included extensive detailed allegations of laundering of millions of dollars from pro-Russia-Ukrainian interests. This indictment provided a clear example of how a foreign-influenced campaign can be financed through illicit means and why the importance of following the money is so crucial.

There have been others, acknowledged financial connections, such as former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn and his payment from RT, the television station that is part of Russia's state-run propaganda apparatus.

Then there are the strange denials, such as when Jared Kushner wrote in his statement in July, "I have not relied on Russian funds to finance my business activities in the private sector."

I can state, that is some kind of good lawyering because the word "rely" is subjective. Mr. Kushner did not deny financial ties to Russia. He said he hadn't relied on those funds, not whether he had any, not whether he ever had any, but he hadn't relied on them. That is about as lawyerly and subjective a statement as you can imagine.

My bottom line is, these financial ties need to be a central focus of the Intelligence Committee's inquiry. The reason I say this, I want to spell out what the connection here is. Our inquiry covered counterintelligence concerns related to Russia and the election, including any intelligence regarding links between Russia and individuals associated with political campaigns. Following the money is counterintelligence 101.

If you want to compromise somebody, money is one of the best ways to do it. Well, let me repeat that. That is the connection. That is the connection between the counterintelligence work that is so important and part of the committee's charge. That counterintelligence work involves following the money because that is key to really getting into the question of whether somebody's been compromised because one of the best ways to do it is through funds.

Tonight, based on this review of documents, I call again on the committee to follow the money aspects of this inquiry, including by holding public hearings specifically on this topic.

In addition, it is not just the Intelligence Committee that ought to focus on these issues. As I have been saying since March, the Senate Finance Committee, of which I am the ranking Democrat, has a crucial role to play on follow-the-money issues as well. Relevant documents produced by elements of the Treasury Department which are outside the intelligence community, such as the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, ought to be reviewed. There is a need to review these documents by the Finance Committee staff because we have specific experience and expertise in financial investigation.

In addition, the Finance Committee specifically has oversight responsibilities for tax matters. The Manafort indictment, which included tax evasion, demonstrated clearly that taxes, tax evasion, offshore accounts, and suspicious real estate transactions are all connected. They are all connected, and they ought to be part of any serious investigation into ties between Russia, the President, and his associates. Unfortunately, I and our committee have gotten no cooperation from the Treasury Department. Despite my repeated requests as the ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee, the Treasury Department has just stonewalled—plain old stonewalling—the lead committee with jurisdiction for the agency.

For that reason, I want to announce tonight that I will hold indefinitely the nomination of the individual to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Intelligence and Analysis until the Department cooperates with the Finance Committee and provides the committee with documents it needs to do its job.

Again, I regret that I have to take this step. By the way, many of these documents are unclassified in nature, so the Treasury Department is denying the Finance Committee access to unclassified documents. That is just completely unacceptable.

We all understand that we are in the midst of extraordinary and dangerous times. As our own intelligence community assessed in January, Russia interfered in our election with a clear preference for Donald Trump. No one, other than Donald Trump, has apparently called this assessment into question. For the sake of our national security and the future of our country, it is important to get to the bottom of every aspect of this attack on our democracy. The American people have clearly stated the urgency behind this.

My view is that the Congress has an obligation to follow the money wherever the evidence leads and to conduct a thorough investigation that leaves no stones unturned and presents to the public what we find. I will close by way of saying that I don't see how you can

do the essential counterintelligence work that is so important to our committee—and I note that the distinguished Presiding Officer of the Senate, the Senator from Missouri, is a member of the committee and a valued one—I don't see how the committee can do its counterintelligence work without following the money, because we know that those financial issues are absolutely key—that money is the key to compromising an individual—it is obviously so important in trying to ensure that we have policies in this country that protect our security and our role in the world.

I yield the floor.

REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT FUNDING BILL

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to the Republican continuing resolution.

In addition to the many, many problems I have with how this bill was secretly written without any attempt to work with Democrats, I also cannot support it because of the absence of the Dream Act and long-term funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program.

On four occasions, Republicans tried to repeal the Affordable Care Act with bills they drafted in secret. These bills had no input from Democrats—or really anyone who would have actually been affected by repeal.

Then they drafted a so-called tax reform bill, again entirely in secret, not consulting anyone outside a small group of Republican lawmakers.

So it is not a surprise that the bill they jammed through is actually nothing more than a tax cut for the richest Americans and large corporations, and all at the expense of American families, who will actually pay higher taxes.

Now, doubling down on their failed strategy of secrecy, Republicans came up with a government funding bill at the very last minute that ignores many of our highest priority needs, including passing the Dream Act and coming up with a long-term solution for CHIP.

I hope that Republicans will finally realize that this isn't the right way to govern. You are not representing the country when you govern 1 month at a time and rush through poorly written bills that only benefit certain special interests.

It is time to return to regular order.

Now I would like to speak about the absence of the Dream Act in this bill, a negligent decision that even the majority of Republicans in this country disagree with.

To say that Republicans have sent mixed signals on DACA is an understatement.

During his campaign, Donald Trump said he supported deporting all undocumented immigrants, including those who had registered for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program.

Later, he said DACA recipients had nothing to worry about. Then, in Sep-

tember, the Justice Department canceled the DACA program. I can't even imagine the uncertainty that DACA recipients have felt since Donald Trump's election.

DACA was put in place in 2012 by President Obama to remove the crushing fear of deportation experienced by hundreds of thousands of young people. These are outstanding individuals who were brought into the country through no choice of their own, at very young ages, and who know no other country than the United States.

In fact, the average DACA recipient was brought into the United States at the age of 6.

Now, there are nearly 700,000 individuals with DACA in the United States, approximately 220,000 of whom live in California. Each day, more than 100 lose their DACA protection, plunging them back into the uncertainty that President Obama relieved.

These young people study, they work, they pay their taxes. They are patriotic. They are American in every way that counts, and to leave them in such uncertainty is nothing less than cruel.

One family in particular has really brought this issue home for me, and that is the Sanchez family from Oakland.

Maria and Eusebio Sanchez lived in the United States for more than 20 years before they were deported in August.

Maria was an oncology nurse, and Eusebio was a truck driver.

They had no criminal records, they paid their taxes, they owned a home, and they contributed to their community.

They also had four children, three of whom are U.S. citizens.

Little Jesus is just 12.

Elizabeth is 16 and currently enrolled in a community learning center.

Melin is 21 and is currently enrolled at UC Santa Cruz, studying molecular cell and developmental biology. She wants to be a pediatrician.

Their oldest daughter, Vianney, is 23, and she is not a citizen.

She is, however, protected under DACA. She graduated from UC Santa Cruz with a degree in psychology, and today Vianney is taking care of her three siblings.

Imagine being thrust into the role of caregiver to your three siblings after your parents are kicked out of the country, but your own ability to remain here also remains uncertain.

Vianney will lose her DACA status in August. Imagine the fear and stress she carries with her every day.

All DACA recipients have to register with the government, so immigration officials know where Vianney lives and works. They could show up any day and deport her, leaving her three younger citizen siblings behind with no one to care for them.

Sadly, the experience of this family isn't rare. There are families like this across the country, people who came to

America looking for a better life, who work and follow the law and contribute.

By ignoring their plight, by not prioritizing the Dream Act, Republicans are telling them they are just not important enough.

I simply can't accept this and ask my Republican colleagues to look into their hearts and find their compassion. Tell these young people they are safe. Tell them they deserve to stay and the Dream Act will pass.

This bill also fails to provide long-term funding stability for the Children's Health Insurance Program and for community health centers. Both of these programs are vital to our communities and provide healthcare for millions of Americans.

CHIP provides health coverage for nearly 9 million children. In California, 1.3 million are currently enrolled in the program and around 2 million are covered at some point during the year.

This program is absolutely critical to support children in working families that are moderate income and can't afford private coverage. Around a quarter of kids on CHIP have special healthcare needs.

I have been hearing from my constituents about how important this program is.

Rachel, from Orange, wrote me to say, "There are many who depend on this assistance to stay alive. I was a type 1 diabetic at 12 with two disabled parents. If not for governmental assistance, I would be dead. Don't leave someone in this same situation hopeless."

Kathleen from Arcata wrote to me and said, "I am a single mom and though my kids are grown now, I had the CHIP for them. I can't imagine what it would be like to raise a child living in similar circumstances now without this program."

CHIP is also an important program for pregnant women. In California, 30,000 expecting mothers depend on the program.

This care is so important for ensuring healthy moms and babies. If funding lapses, these expectant mothers are at risk of losing their coverage.

Funding for community health centers is also at risk.

There are more than 10,400 centers that see more than 25 million patients across the country.

In California, we have more than 1,500 centers that care for more than 4.4 million patients each year in California. If we don't provide long-term funding for these centers, there is no doubt they will have to limit hours, lay off staff, or even close.

Supporting community health centers isn't just the right thing to do for access, but for positive outcomes and cost-effectiveness as well.

Health center patients have an 18 percent lower rate of emergency room visits. Medicaid patients receiving care at health centers have costs that are 24 percent lower, and the quality of care

is exceptional. Patients do better, and it costs less.

For all the talk about bipartisan support for these two programs, I am profoundly disappointed that we have not addressed their funding in a meaningful way.

Healthcare coverage for kids and access to basic healthcare services in our communities should be a no-brainer. I strongly support these programs and hope we can provide stability soon.

In conclusion, this has been a bad year for governance, and it is being capped off by yet another disappointing display by Republicans.

All of us saw and heard the thousands of Dreamers who visited our offices. We saw not only their passion but also their desire to make a difference.

Many of these young people live in fear every day.

Congress has a chance to improve their lives and provide for them a positive, productive future.

Republicans have chosen to ignore truly time-sensitive issues like DACA, CHIP, and basic government funding. Instead, they chose to spend months on tax cuts for rich Americans and big corporations.

Tax cuts for rich people aren't time-sensitive. Protecting children is.

Let's get back on track, let's add the Dream Act and CHIP to this bill, and let's return to the good governance that our people expect.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

DEFICITS

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, the question is, Do deficits matter? We often say they do. You will hear Republicans say they do, and for the last week or two, you have heard from Democrats that they were against cutting taxes because it might add to the deficit. Well, if this is true, tonight we will get a chance to vote on the deficit because, you see, Congress about 6 years ago, put something forward called pay-go budget caps. What does that mean? They kept seeing the deficit explode. So they put in these budget caps, and if we were to adhere to them, we would actually get the debt under control. Guess what. Congress has evaded them 29 times.

So tonight we will have a bill, and it will be the 30th time that Congress has evaded their own rules on the debt. Is it any surprise that the debt under George W. Bush went from \$5 trillion to \$10 trillion? Is it any surprise that under President Obama it went from \$10 trillion to \$20 trillion? Is it any surprise that the debt continues to rise? No, because both parties are responsible for it.

Look, I was all for the tax cut. I think it is good for the country, but I am also for restraining spending. So we did the tax cut earlier in the week, and now we are going to do a spending bill. We have rules in place, and the rules in

place say that there are budget caps. So they have a special little waiver that they have put in the spending bills because we are now going to exceed those caps.

So the question is, Are we serious about the debt? Are we serious about adding a million dollars a minute to the debt? That is what happens. We borrow a million dollars a minute. The deficit this year will be over \$700 billion—\$20 trillion in total. The total debt is bigger than our entire economy.

So both sides give lip service to it, and yet both sides want more spending. On the Republican side, this year's request is \$80 billion above the caps for military. On the Democratic side, they say: Well, you don't get yours unless we get ours. Yet nobody cares about the debt. So really the debt is being driven by the GOP, who want more military money but the only way they can get it is giving the Democrats more welfare money.

So the interesting thing about this vote is—you have heard the other side of the aisle saying it—they can't vote for the tax cut because of the debt. If they care about the debt, let's cut spending. This is their chance. This will be a vote on cutting spending. These pay-go budget caps were put in place by the Democrats when they were in the majority in 2010. These are their budget caps, and yet everybody is clamoring to waive them on both sides.

We have a real problem in our country, and we must do something about it. Ultimately, there will be a day of reckoning. You cannot continue to borrow so much money. Ultimately, it bankrupts the Nation, or the currency becomes worthless, or you get to a point where the interest on the debt actually becomes the No. 1 spending item. Within about a decade, interest will push out all other spending, and it will be the No. 1 item. We will spend more on interest than national defense. We will spend more on interest than welfare and anything else. So there are those who say: Well, we have to have more money for military; we have to have more money for welfare. You are going to have none of that if you keep spending money at this rate because we are going to ruin the country through debt.

So can we have a strong military? Yes. We spend about \$600 billion, but you can't necessarily spend \$700 billion. That extra \$100 billion is making the debt worse. But it is the same on the other side of the ledger with the Democrats.

So we have a chance. There really is a chance. The media would say: Oh, you are irresponsible for voting for the tax cuts. No, you are irresponsible if you are not also willing to vote for spending cuts.

So tonight I will put forward in a few minutes a motion, and this motion will be to say that we should obey the spending caps. We have put them in place. Unless our outrage over debt is fake outrage, if we truly care about the

debt, we should vote to keep in place the rules we have put in place. These are spending caps. If we care about the next generation, we should vote for the spending caps. So I will put forward a motion that says: Let's obey our own rules.

It will be interesting to watch the vote and to see how it turns out—who truly cares about the debt on either side of the aisle, who is willing to say: You know what; I am for tax cuts but I am also for saying across the board that we need to have spending restraint. Will we obey our own rules? We have broken our own rules. This will be the 30th time we broke our own rules on budget caps since 2010. If you go back farther, it is in the hundreds of times. If you were scoring Congress on integrity and honesty about the rules we have set up, it would be a zero. We aren't adhering to our own rules.

So what I would admonish my colleagues to do is, if they care about debt, is to vote for this point of order that says that we should adhere to our budget caps and we should really truly care about the budget deficit.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

MEDICARE FUNDING

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise in strong opposition to the point of order that will be offered by the Senator from Kentucky, which would have the effect of allowing harmful, indiscriminate budget cuts to be triggered. While there are certain safety net programs like Medicaid, food stamps, and Social Security that are exempt from these automatic cuts, the Medicare Program is not exempt, and there are a number of other vital programs in addition to Medicare, including Federal education programs, agricultural support for farmers, and funding for Citizenship and Immigration Services, among others, that would be subject to immediate automatic cuts if we failed to take action tonight to avert that outcome.

It has been deeply disturbing to me to see seniors frightened about the possibility that a \$25 billion cut in Medicare—that is a 4-percent reduction—would be automatically triggered. By waiving this point of order, we will prevent such cuts from taking place, reassuring our Nation's seniors and their loved ones.

Although the law that could cause this reduction has been waived some 16 times—and indeed never implemented since it was enacted—I felt that it was essential that our leaders publicly commit that Medicare reductions would not be triggered, given the amount of fear, anxiety, and misinformation that is out there.

I wrote to the Senate majority leader, urging that we immediately remove the threat of an automatic cut in Medicare's funding. In response, I am pleased to say that both the majority

leader and the Speaker of the House released a joint statement that pledged this will not happen, and that is the issue before us tonight.

Medicare provides essential healthcare benefits to our Nation's seniors. We must remove, immediately, the threat that an automatic reduction in the program's funding could occur, which would affect healthcare providers and diminish access that beneficiaries—including our seniors and disabled individuals—have to the services they need.

Earlier this month, AARP sent a letter to the House and the Senate leadership, alluding and supporting my inquiry and warning Congress of the potential consequences. The letter says:

The sudden cut to Medicare provider funding in 2018 would have an immediate and lasting impact, including fewer healthcare providers participating in Medicare and reduced access to care for Medicare beneficiaries. Healthcare providers may choose to stop accepting Medicare patients at a time when the Medicare population is growing by 10,000 new beneficiaries each day. . . . Furthermore, Medicare Advantage plans and Part D prescription drug plans may charge higher premiums or cost sharing in future years to make up for these cuts now.

These potential cuts would have an enormous impact on our hospitals, our nursing homes, our home health agencies, and other essential healthcare providers who play a critical role in providing healthcare services and also as important economic drivers in our communities.

It is critical for Congress to act quickly, to act tonight before we go home, so seniors do not have the anxiety of wondering whether the tax bill will somehow negatively affect their healthcare. We can act tonight to remove that anxiety and assure them it will not.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the exchange of letters I had with Majority Leader MCCONNELL and also the letter from AARP be printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, November 28, 2017.

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

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER MCCONNELL: I write to express my deep concerns with the Congressional Budget Office's determination that an automatic four percent cut to Medicare, estimated to be roughly \$25 billion for fiscal year 2018, could be triggered by the passage of tax reform legislation as a result of the Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 (PAYGO) even though there is no intention for such a reduction to occur.

Since I do not believe it is anyone's intention to allow automatic cuts to Medicare to occur, I urge swift action to waive the PAYGO requirements. Medicare provides essential benefits to our nation's seniors, and we must remove immediately the threat that an automatic reduction in the program's funding could occur.

Since PAYGO was enacted, sixteen laws that would have otherwise triggered PAYGO's automatic spending cuts have in-

cluded provisions to exclude all or part of the law's budgetary impact, including the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 that was enacted under the previous Administration.

I look forward to working with you to ensure that no Medicare cuts are triggered under PAYGO, a goal I believe is supported by members on both sides of the aisle. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

SUSAN M. COLLINS, U.S. SENATOR.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, December 1, 2017.

Hon. SUSAN COLLINS,
Dirksen Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR COLLINS: Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the across-the-board spending cuts. You will be pleased to know that Speaker Paul Ryan and I issued the following joint statement earlier today:

"Critics of tax reform are claiming the legislation would lead to massive, across-the-board spending cuts in vital programs—including a 4-percent reduction in Medicare—due to the Pay-Go law enacted in 2010. This will not happen. Congress has readily available methods to waive this law, which has never been enforced since its enactment. There is no reason to believe that Congress would not act again to prevent a sequester, and we will work to ensure these spending cuts are prevented."

Again, thank you.

Sincerely,

MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader.

AARP®,
December 7, 2017.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
U.S. Senate,
U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC.
Hon. CHARLES E. SCHUMER,
U.S. Senate,
U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC.
Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
House of Representatives,
U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC.
Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
House of Representatives,
U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER MCCONNELL, MINORITY LEADER SCHUMER, SPEAKER RYAN, AND MINORITY LEADER PELOSI: On behalf of our members and all Americans age 50 and older, AARP is writing to express concerns about the potential for automatic cuts to Medicare beginning in January 2018. AARP, with its nearly 38 million members in all 50 States and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, represents millions of individuals whose health care depends on Medicare. We urge you to act now to prevent these cuts to Medicare.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently provided an explanation of the impact H.R. 1 and its \$1.5 trillion deficit increase will have on Medicare and other programs. The CBO estimated that because of statutory pay-as-you-go and the increase in the deficit, Medicare providers will be subject to an automatic \$25 billion cut in fiscal year 2018, and additional cuts in subsequent fiscal years. According to CBO, the automatic cuts, or sequester, would begin as soon as January, 2018.

In a statement responding to Senator Collins's inquiry on statutory pay-as-you-go and the risk of Medicare cuts, Leader McConnell and Speaker Ryan provided the following assurance: "Congress has readily available methods to waive this law, which has never been enforced since its enactment. There is no reason to believe that Congress

would not act again to prevent a sequester, and we will work to ensure these spending cuts are prevented." It is of paramount interest to our members, and other older Americans, that you act to prevent these spending cuts as soon as possible.

The sudden cut to Medicare provider funding in 2018 would have an immediate and lasting impact, including fewer providers participating in Medicare and reduced access to care for Medicare beneficiaries. Health care providers may choose to stop accepting Medicare patients at a time when the Medicare population is growing by 10,000 new beneficiaries each day. Cutting reimbursement in 2018, and possibly each year thereafter, would discourage health care providers from treating this growing population. We need to protect and strengthen the Medicare program and ensure there is a health care workforce able and willing to take on new patients. Furthermore, Medicare Advantage plans and Part D prescription drug plans may charge higher premiums or cost-sharing in future years to make up for the cuts now. These cuts also come at a critical time in the program when providers are adopting the new payment systems according to MACRA (P.L. 114-10) which overwhelmingly passed Congress in 2015. An across-the-board cut to provider reimbursement will leave health care providers fewer resources to invest in their practices, and make them less inclined to take on risk in new alternative payment models. The sudden payment cut will stifle the transition toward payment based on value, having implications for future Medicare cost growth. In any event, Medicare beneficiaries will pay the price for these sudden and significant cuts.

Our members and other older Americans are counting on you to preserve their access to Medicare services, including their doctors and hospitals. We urge you to act swiftly to prevent automatic cuts to Medicare. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me or contact Joyce Rogers, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs.

Sincerely,

JO ANN C. JENKINS,
Chief Executive Officer.

Ms. COLLINS. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The majority leader.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY BLUE CAMPAIGN AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany H.R. 1370.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the House agree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1370) entitled "An Act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to issue Department of Homeland Security-wide guidance and develop training programs as part of the Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign, and for other purposes.", with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 1370.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator PAUL be recognized for up to 2

minutes to make a budget point of order; that Senator COLLINS or her designee be recognized for up to 2 minutes to make a motion to waive the point of order; that Senator LEAHY be recognized for up to 5 minutes; that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the motion to waive; and that following the disposition of the motion to waive, the Senate vote on the motion to concur, with a 60 affirmative vote threshold, all without any other intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, the question is, Do deficits matter? We have had a lot of debate over deficits and people complaining that tax cuts add to deficits. Well, tonight we will have a vote on whether we should honor what are called pay-go budget caps. We have had these in place for about 6 years. Congress has disobeyed their own rules 30 times as of tonight. These budget caps would keep spending in order. Yet we are going to have them waived tonight.

My budget point of order would actually say that we should not waive these budget caps. We should honor them because deficits do matter.

We borrow \$1 million a minute. The deficit this year will be over \$700 billion. The overall debt is \$20 trillion. We have a spending problem. We have rules to keep spending in check, and we disobey our own rules.

With that, I make a point of order on the statutory pay-go scorecard that says we should spend within certain limits. This budget point of order is pursuant to section 306 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, we simply cannot allow these harmful, indiscriminate budget cuts to be triggered. It is so disturbing to see our seniors worried about the possibility of a \$25 billion cut in the Medicare Program. That is a 4-percent reduction. That would affect healthcare providers and healthcare services. There is no need for this indiscriminate cut to occur.

It is critical that Congress act tonight, act immediately, so that seniors and our disabled citizens do not have the anxiety of wondering whether the tax bill will somehow negatively affect their healthcare. By voting to waive the point of order, we can remove that anxiety and prevent the indiscriminate cuts in Medicare and other essential programs from occurring.

Pursuant to section 904 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and the waiver provisions of applicable budget resolutions, I move to waive all applicable sections of that act and applicable budget resolutions for purposes of the House message to accompany H.R. 1370, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. 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. LEAHY. 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. LEAHY. Mr. President, I yield back the time on this side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question now occurs on agreeing to the motion to waive.

The yeas and nays were previously ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The result was announced—yeas 91, nays 8, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 324 Leg.]

YEAS—91

Alexander	Franken	Nelson
Baldwin	Gardner	Perdue
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Peters
Bennet	Graham	Portman
Blumenthal	Grassley	Reed
Blunt	Harris	Roberts
Booker	Hassan	Rounds
Boozman	Hatch	Rubio
Brown	Heinrich	Sanders
Burr	Heitkamp	Schatz
Cantwell	Heller	Schumer
Capito	Hirono	Scott
Cardin	Hoeven	Shaheen
Carper	Inhofe	Shelby
Casey	Isakson	Stabenow
Cassidy	Johnson	Strange
Cochran	Kaine	Sullivan
Collins	King	Tester
Coons	Klobuchar	Thune
Corker	Lankford	Tillis
Cornyn	Leahy	Toomey
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Udall
Cotton	Markey	Van Hollen
Daines	McCaskey	Warner
Donnelly	McConnell	Warren
Duckworth	Menendez	Whitehouse
Durbin	Merkley	Wicker
Enzi	Moran	Wyden
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Feinstein	Murphy	
Fischer	Murray	

NAYS—8

Crapo	Kennedy	Risch
Cruz	Lee	Sasse
Flake	Paul	

NOT VOTING—1

McCain

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 91, the nays are 8.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to and the point of order falls.

VOTE ON MOTION TO CONCUR

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

Mr. ROUNDS. 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

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

The result was announced—yeas 66, nays 32, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 325 Leg.]

YEAS—66

Alexander	Gardner	Perdue
Barrasso	Graham	Peters
Blunt	Grassley	Portman
Boozman	Hassan	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heinrich	Rounds
Carper	Heitkamp	Rubio
Cassidy	Heller	Sasse
Cochran	Hoeben	Scott
Collins	Inhofe	Shaheen
Coons	Johnson	Shelby
Corker	Kaine	Stabenow
Cornyn	Kennedy	Strange
Cotton	King	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Tester
Cruz	Leahy	Thune
Daines	Manchin	Tillis
Donnelly	McCaskill	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Udall
Ernst	Moran	Warner
Fischer	Murkowski	Wicker
Flake	Nelson	Young

NAYS—32

Baldwin	Feinstein	Murray
Bennet	Franken	Paul
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Reed
Booker	Harris	Sanders
Brown	Hirono	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cardin	Lee	Van Hollen
Casey	Markey	Warren
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Merkley	Wyden
Durbin	Murphy	

NOT VOTING—2

Isakson McCain

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I will speak very briefly.

While I voted to keep the government going, this is not the way to govern. We should not be doing stopgap measures. We will be back here soon. We will have a relatively short time—a couple of weeks—to finally do our work, the work we should have done for the last 6 months. We will have to address sequestration on both sides of the ledger—on defense and non-defense—and raise the caps for both. We have to speak on one of the greatest issues in our country today, and that is the Dreamers, and we have to address that and have votes up or down on the Senate floor. I intend to vote to protect Dreamers. We have to vote on the Children's Health Insurance Program. There are so many others.

I want Senators on both sides of the aisle to know—and I have talked to both Republicans and Democrats—Senator COCHRAN and I and others have tried to keep the appropriations process going. We will continue to do that.

We will do that when we come back. There will not be another continuing resolution without a bipartisan budget agreement.

Mr. President, this is not how we should govern in the U.S. Senate. We have once again found ourselves on the edge of a manufactured, made-in-Washington crisis. Once again, we are forced into political games at the eleventh hour by the imminent threat of a Republican shutdown. This time that threat has fallen right before Christmas and the holidays.

There is no reason we should find ourselves in this situation. There has always been a proven path forward to avoid this crisis, and that path is to reach a bipartisan budget deal that is based on parity. Sequestration has had devastating consequences on our country that will impact a generation, and we must raise the budget caps on both sides of the ledger—defense and non-defense.

This is not an academic exercise. Our decisions are having real and devastating consequences. We are letting our infrastructure crumble. We are letting down our veterans. We are allowing our education programs to fall behind, and we are harming our military's readiness.

Regrettably, our Republican Colleagues took the path of delay, no compromise, government by crisis. Here we are, 3 months into the fiscal year without a budget. The continuing resolution that is before us provides a 1-month extension to fund the government, but we are no closer to a bipartisan budget deal. I intend to vote for this continuing resolution because a government shutdown helps no one, but I implore my fellow Senators to use the next month wisely. We owe it to the American people.

Those on the other side of the aisle need to come to the table to negotiate an agreement that will provide funding for healthcare to our veterans, build infrastructure for a growing economy, and make us more secure.

But this is not the only thing we must accomplish in the coming month. Our list of unfinished business is long. We also need to pass the Dream Act. President Trump's decision to end the DACA program was as cruel as it was senseless. Dreamers are American in every way except on paper, having been brought here as children through no fault of their own. By definition, Dreamers are law-abiding strivers, serving our communities as doctors and teachers and defending our homeland as brave men and women in uniform.

Instead of working with Congress to find a permanent legislative solution while keeping DACA protections in place, the President yielded to xenophobic nativists in his administration and terminated protections for our Nation's Dreamers.

I am greatly disappointed that Republicans would not consider including the Dream Act on this continuing reso-

lution. We simply cannot fail to pass the Dream Act, and we must do so, and we must do so soon. The future of Dreamers—and I believe the fate of the American Dream itself—lies in our hands.

We also need a permanent reauthorization for the Children's Health Insurance Program. It has been 3 months since Congress let funds expire for the Children's Health Insurance Program, CHIP, putting at risk the 9 million children nationwide who depend on the program for health insurance coverage.

Vermont's CHIP program, known as Dr. Dynasaur, covers over 5,000 children whose families are now worried whether their kids will be covered next year. Instead of moving forward with a bipartisan reauthorization for 5 years, as has been proposed in the Senate, this continuing resolution extends the program only temporarily.

What is worse, the majority is insisting on offsetting this extension by cutting funding for prevention and public health programs. This is robbing Peter to pay Paul. If we can pass a tax cut that benefits the wealthiest Americans and which will add, at a minimum, \$1.5 trillion to our deficit, we should be able to reauthorize CHIP—for longer than 3 months—without undermining public health. We should not have to make this choice, but here we are, being forced to choose between a misguided short-term patch or a wholesale government shutdown.

Again, I call on our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to use the next month to negotiate solutions to these real problems. That includes having a debate about American's privacy rights. Section 702 of the FISA Amendments Act was intended to be a powerful foreign intelligence surveillance tool, and it is, but it also sweeps up massive amounts of Americans' communications, which can then be accessed without a warrant. That has long been a concern of mine, and I have stated that we should reauthorize 702, but we should not do so at the expense of our own civil liberties.

A 1-month extension gives Congress an opportunity—and I believe, an obligation—to debate this program on the floor, just like we did in 2012. All Members deserve an opportunity to weigh in on this critical surveillance tool, and this short, clean reauthorization of Section 702 allows for just that.

To be clear, the Republicans are in charge of the House, the Senate, and the White House. It is clear that they bear the burden of bringing us to this crisis point, and they need to answer to the American people for the unfinished business before us. We should never have gotten to this point.

We can still reach a bipartisan budget deal. I remain ready to work with Chairman COCHRAN, the Appropriations Committee, and Members from both sides of the aisle to secure the funding agreements we need to complete our appropriations, keep the lights on, and resolve the other pressing matters before us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, as the jet fumes swirl around the Halls of Congress and Members get ready to head to the airport to get home for the holidays, I rise to remind my colleagues that there are still hundreds of thousands of people in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico who are still hurting from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. They will be spending Christmas not in their homes but in a hotel or with family and friends or in temporary housing.

All across these regions, there are houses, businesses, schools, churches, and community establishments that still need to be rebuilt. They are waiting, counting on our help. It is wrong. Indeed, it is maddening to those in the affected regions that the Senate is not taking up legislation today to give them what they need to continue to rebuild and recover.

In my home State, there is no doubting that Texas's gulf coast communities suffered tremendous losses in Hurricane Harvey, but the hurricane also brought out the best in Texas. We saw Texans standing together and lifting up each other, first through rescue and response and now as we come together and rebuild our communities. The Nation witnessed our iconic moments, from the thousands of Texans who went out on boats to save their neighbors, to Houstonians of all ages lining up to volunteer at disaster recovery centers, embodying the Texas can-do spirit.

Texas has worked diligently since August on cleanup and recovery efforts from Hurricane Harvey, but I am sorry to say that the U.S. Senate is now leaving town without delivering on its commitment to help Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico recover.

Congress has already passed two disaster relief bills in the wake of these hurricanes. In addition, Congress passed a bipartisan disaster relief tax bill that I was proud to offer. But there is still much more that needs to be done.

Just hours ago, our colleagues in the House passed a bill to further provide for emergency rebuilding efforts. This bill represents progress, but much more work needs to be done to make sure that it does enough, especially for Texas, which was promised by both this Congress and by the administration that Texas would be given everything we need to rebuild. Early estimates from the supplemental bill that passed the House are that Texas would be eligible for only a small percentage of the \$81 billion in that legislation. That is unacceptable, and the Senate needs to fix it.

Texas experienced the worst flood event in U.S. history. Hurricane Harvey was unlike any other storm we

have seen before in Texas—the number of people impacted, the scope. It brought 250 miles of devastation to our Texas gulf coast as winds obliterated whole communities and rain flooded out parts of Texas that have never flooded before.

Due to the level of damage the storm caused to homes, businesses, and infrastructure, Hurricane Harvey was the costliest disaster this year and may well prove the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history. According to the Governor of Texas, the damage to our State from the hurricane is well over \$120 billion and could prove to be closer to \$180 billion. Any bill to provide disaster funding brought to this floor should recognize the unprecedented level of damage wreaked upon the State and should provide the level of assistance necessary to help Texas rebuild.

I spoke this afternoon with Governor Greg Abbott, and he expressed serious concerns that the supplemental bill coming out of the House does not direct nearly enough resources to the State of Texas given the magnitude of the damage, the magnitude of the suffering. Disaster relief needs to focus where the suffering occurred and where the disaster occurred.

I am hopeful that when this body returns in 2 weeks, we will work together in a bipartisan way to ensure that the promises made to the State of Texas are fulfilled and that the resources are there to help our State rebuild. The emergency response is over, but recovery and rebuilding efforts go on. As we keep working to keep our promises, I remain determined to keep fighting to ensure that Texas has the Federal resources to which the State is entitled under Federal law.

The spirit of Texas is strong. Some weeks ago, I tweeted out a picture that I think captured some of that spirit. It was a picture of a man in his living room. The Sheetrock was torn down from all the walls—nothing but studs on the walls and no carpet. The flooring was taken up. There was no furniture. He had a lawn chair. He had an Igloo ice chest as a coffee table and a TV screen, and he was wearing a Houston Astros jersey and cheering as the Astros won the World Series. The tweet simply said: “This is why it matters.” That is the spirit of Texas. We need to remember that spirit, and we need to make sure the disaster relief responds to the real damage and real suffering that Hurricane Harvey visited upon the State of Texas.

I look forward to working with my colleagues, hopefully from both sides of the aisle, to deliver on that commitment that Texans are owed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

PRESSING ISSUES AT YEAR END

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, as we know all too well, the Senate of the

United States has an annual job to do—to adopt a budget and then appropriate it; to lay out the framework for what to spend and then to make deliberate decisions in the Appropriations Committee and move forward by the end of the fiscal year.

This may not be well or widely known, but the Federal fiscal year begins October 1. It is by October 1 that we are supposed to figure out what we are going to spend and how we are going to spend it and why we are going to spend it.

As we all head home to celebrate the holidays on December 21, I just wanted to take a moment and go over the list of things that are unaddressed and unresolved at the end of this calendar year.

The way it is supposed to work here and the way it is actually working here are strikingly different. In my 7 years now in the Senate on both the Budget Committee and the Appropriations Committee, I have seen people of good will of both parties try mightily and so far consistently fail to get us back to regular order and to end this process of moving crisis to crisis, continuing resolution to continuing resolution.

While I didn't hope that tonight the Federal Government of the United States would shut down, it is depressing, concerning, even alarming to me that we head home having not resolved so many issues.

We have heard from other Members here about the pressing needs of their home States. We have concerns all over our country, such as the Children's Health Insurance Program, known as CHIP, which is a literal lifeline to 9 million low-income children. Authorization and funding ran out months ago. Some States are already notifying parents that their children's health insurance coverage will lapse. There are community health centers on which 26 million patients rely. There is the pressing need to fund a response to the opioid crisis, the need to fund veterans' care, infrastructure, shore up pension plans, invest in education, and, of course, respond to natural disasters. From Americans in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to Americans in Texas and Florida and Louisiana, to those in California and the West—whether it is hurricanes or forest fires, parts of our Nation are literally flooding and burning. Yet we head home having not addressed their challenges.

Of course, I feel concerned that we have failed to act to protect the Dreamers here in our country, the young men and women brought here who have never known any other country, men and women who reflect the best of our country. I met many in my home State of Delaware. They are high school and college students, members of our military, parts of our neighborhoods and communities. But given the Trump administration's decision, the President's decision to end an administrative policy allowing these young people to come out of the shadows and

live without fear of being deported, we wait for bipartisan legislative action to give them the security they deserve and the ability to participate wholly in the American Dream.

I believe we can pass a bipartisan Dream Act that both protects Dreamers and makes our borders more secure, but all of these issues seem to become more partisan and more difficult fights than they need to be. We should be able to work together to resolve our differences and not have to go home with yet another continuing resolution, keeping the government afloat while we head out to celebrate. Our constituents didn't send us here to fight endless partisan battles, to avoid the strictures of the Budget Act and the appropriations process, and when things get tough, to just kick the can down the road.

Before I leave the floor, I want to speak about one other pressing concern I have, and that is about the importance of maintaining the independence of the investigation currently underway under the leadership of Special Counsel Robert Mueller. I have heard concerning, even alarming attacks on the special counsel by colleagues in the other Chamber and by folks in the press.

I just want to take a moment to say that our Nation relies on a few key institutions and principles that protect this experiment in democracy, and none are more important than the rule of law and the institutions that make up our system of justice. As partisanship, gridlock, and distress have become more prevalent in our country and corrosive to our politics, these institutions that sustain our democratic system are more important than ever.

I have traveled to other countries that have on pieces of paper Constitutions and legal systems that literally mirror our own, but they are ineffective and their systems are nondemocratic because their courts are not independent and their national leaders are not held accountable.

Across our country for generations, from classrooms to courtrooms, in Congress and communities, we have affirmed to Americans of all backgrounds the importance of the principle that no one is above the rule of law. Our country has been able to grow and change and improve because we are a nation of laws—laws that can be debated and changed but must be followed and respected.

The Department of Justice isn't respected because of its role on a piece of paper, no matter how treasured and important, or because of its title engraved above the door of the building or its motto; it is respected, trusted, and relied upon because it has strived to uphold our highest ideals and to enforce the law.

It is easier to save an institution like the rule of law than it is to restore it once torn down. This is why I helped author bipartisan legislation that would seek to further affirm the rule of

law and the independence of the Department of Justice specifically by protecting special counsel investigations from unwarranted political interference.

We have spirited debates over taxation, immigration, our Federal budget, but this issue is too important for me to yield the floor before this end of the year without urging my colleagues to seriously consider the important task we face to maintain the independence of the Department of Justice and uphold the rule of law.

I hope folks in this Chamber will consider the importance of protecting this investigation and this special counsel and, frankly, of continuing to protect the independence and integrity of the Department of Justice and our system of courts and law into the future. It is part of the bedrock on which our democracy rests, a bedrock which we cannot afford to have shaken.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN VOLLEYBALL TEAM FOR WINNING THE 2017 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION DIVISION I VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise this evening to call up and adopt a resolution recognizing this year's NCAA champions in women's volleyball—the Huskers from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This is the program's fifth national championship and second title in 3 years.

During the NCAA tournament, Nebraska played remarkably well, winning 18 sets and finishing on a 19-match winning streak. They were so fun to watch.

The entire team contributed to the outstanding victory, and I want to acknowledge their extraordinary effort: Annika Albrecht, Mikaela Foecke, Hunter Atherton, Hayley Densberger, Allie Havers, Briana Holman, Kenzie Maloney, Kelly Hunter, Chesney McClellan, Sami Slaughter, Lauren Stivrins, Jazz Sweet, Anezka Szabo, and Sydney Townsend all had their hard work pay off and they worked together to win a championship.

The Nebraska coaches worked hard, helped train our athletes, and strategized this championship run.

Head coach John Cook won his fourth national champion as a Husker head coach. He was joined by assistant coach Tyler Hildebrand, assistant coach Kayla Banwarth, volunteer assistant coach Ryan Coomes, director of operations Lindsay Peterson, video coordinator Kelly O'Connor, and graduate managers Joe Klein, John Henry, and Bre Mackie. Together, as a team, they guided that outstanding group of women to another national championship. These coaches have created a foundation and a winning tradition—

winning the national championship in front of a record-setting crowd of Husker fans—the best fans in college football. Nebraskans couldn't be more proud of this volleyball team and the coaching staff.

The Huskers won this national championship the Nebraska way—with hard work, sportsmanship, and determination. They deserve to be saluted by the Senate, and I urge my colleagues to pass this resolution and recognize their outstanding accomplishment.

I congratulate them on their victory and know they will continue to be great role models to girls and athletes everywhere.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I thank my senior Senator for leading us in this resolution.

Nebraska volleyball continues to dominate. If there is any debate about the best volleyball State in the Union, there should be no more. Nebraska has proved, yet again, we have the best team, the best coaching staff, and indisputably the best fans in the country.

Two years ago, this team won the national championship at home in Omaha, setting records with the crowds that attended the games there, and last week in Kansas City, we set another alltime record with the most watched championship volleyball game ever at 18,516 fans, including my 6-year old who stayed awake at nearly 11 p.m. as we were finishing, and he was deciding to watch it upside down, hanging over the seats from the upper decks at the arena in Kansas City.

So I proudly join the senior Senator and Husker nation in congratulating these young women, saying “Go Big Red” on behalf of all 1.9 million Nebraskans.

Just two stats of note. First, in the earlier round at the final four, Nebraska beat Penn State. Those are the two winningest teams in the history of volleyball. Nebraska has the most wins at 1,308. Penn State has the greatest winning percentage. We have now won five championships in 22 years, as well as three runner-up, second-place finishes in the last 30 years.

Coach Cook, as Senator FISCHER mentioned, has won four championships at Nebraska over the last 17 years. The alltime record for the history of volleyball is five national championships, and we expect that Coach Cook will set that new record.

So I join my senior Senator in urging the Senate to pass this resolution for the University of Nebraska women's volleyball team.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 365, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 365) congratulating the University of Nebraska-Lincoln volleyball team for winning the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Volleyball Championship.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 365) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mrs. FISCHER. Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, first, I congratulate the Nebraska women's volleyball team and say I was proud to be here on the floor to be one of those who did not object to this wonderful resolution just offered by my colleagues from Nebraska.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am standing here tonight to talk about a couple of things, and first is the tax legislation that was passed this week in Congress. This is going to help everybody I represent because it is going to help our entire country. It is going to lift up our country in ways we are already beginning to see.

There have been a lot of people to thank, and today I was at the signing ceremony where Speaker RYAN and President pro tempore ORRIN HATCH signed the official legislation that is now on its way to the President for his signature. I start by thanking them—Speaker RYAN, Chairman HATCH, and also Chairman BRADY of the Ways and Means Committee, with whom I worked closely on this. He was a gentleman. He was, as always, someone who was looking for ways to solve problems and to get to yes, and I commend him for that.

I also want to thank some of the colleagues on the Finance Committee whom I worked closely with. This Core 4 group includes Senator JOHN THUNE, Senator PAT TOOMEY, Senator TIM SCOTT.

Maybe, most importantly, is the staff. We had an enormous undertaking here, and it was ambitious to try to meet the goals that were set out early on of real, middle-class tax cuts, also energizing the economy through helping small businesses, and then changing the whole international system so we could level the playing field. It was a lot to do, and it took a lot of expertise and a lot of time and effort. So to

Mark Prater, Jay Khosla, and Brendan Dunn, who led that effort, we all owe you our thanks. Then, of course, there are a slew of other staff, including Zach Rudisill of my staff, who just spent hours and hours and put his heart and soul into this. Thank you—all of you—for helping us get to this point.

For years, Democrats and Republicans alike have called for middle-class tax cuts. We talk about it in campaigns. I am proud to say that this week we delivered on it.

I know some of my Democratic colleagues have been critical of the legislation, and some have said: Well, these are not real, middle-class tax cuts because they expire. Yes, they expire after 8 years. We wished they didn't. Those are the budget rules here, but that is the same thing that happened with the 2001 tax cuts, the 2003 tax cuts, and Congress worked to extend those using the same budget rules for about 95 percent of those taxpayers. I am strongly hoping we will do the same thing, and I believe we will.

This is real tax relief. For families in Ohio of median income, the average will be just over \$2,000 every year. That helps the family budget. That is a little money you can put aside for retirement. Maybe that is money to use for a vacation you didn't have. If you are living paycheck to paycheck, which is true with a lot of people I represent, that is a big help. It is a big help. That is from doubling the child credit, that is from doubling the standard deduction, essentially creating \$14,000 of a zero income bracket.

By the way, doing those sorts of things in this bill means that about 3 million Americans or more are going to be leaving the tax rolls all together. These are people who have tax liability now and, under the new bill, starting in a couple of weeks, they will not have an income tax liability. They will be out from under the IRS. They will be able, as they move many of them from welfare to work or from a Federal program into gainful employment, to not worry about the taxman. That is really important too. I am proud of the legislation because I think it is going to really help the people I represent in an immediate way.

People will see it in their paychecks. The proof is in the paychecks because they will see it, and probably starting in February, the withholding will change. The IRS has to go through a process on that. I wrote a letter to them yesterday encouraging them to move on that quickly because people want to see that in their paychecks. So the tax relief starts in a couple of weeks, January 1. It will be in the paychecks when the withholding changes—hopefully sometime in late January, February—and people will see less money being withheld from their paycheck because of the tax cuts that enable them to have a healthier family budget.

I have to tell you I believe this is going to go well beyond that for the

people I represent. As important as those middle-class tax cuts are, equally as important is what we are doing to stimulate more investment in this economy, and that is through the changes for small businesses that will now be able to put more money into the business rather than paying more taxes. Many of these businesses—so-called passthrough companies, which are most of the businesses in America—pay taxes as individuals. They don't pay the business tax rate; they pay the individual tax rate. Many of them do take a dividend. They take money out of the company every year for one purpose, and that is to pay their taxes. To the extent they are not taking the money out as much to pay those taxes because of the changes we made here for small businesses, they are going to be able to invest more in their people, more in their equipment, more in their plants—and I am hearing this from small business people around the State of Ohio.

Last weekend, I was with a number of them, and they are excited about this because they want to be able to invest more in their business, they want to be able to invest more in their people, and they want to be able to give people who work for them the opportunity to have a higher wage.

Right now, wages are flat, and they really have been for the past couple of decades when you take inflation into account. This has the incredible opportunity for us not just to provide middle-class tax cuts, which are important not just to help businesses invest, but actually to help get wages up so people will see that if they work hard and play by the rules, they are going to see higher wages, the ability to get ahead, and have more hope for themselves and for their kids and their grandkids. Everyone, regardless of economic status, region, or party is going to see the benefits of this tax reform bill.

By the way, some workers are already seeing the benefit, as we talked today, because there are a bunch of companies that announced today that because of the tax reform and tax cuts legislation, they are already taking steps to increase the pay of their employees, increase benefits, or invest more money in building plants, equipment, or adding more jobs to investment or both. These companies include some big companies you have heard of like Comcast. It includes other companies like Wells Fargo and Boeing and AT&T. They have made these announcements today.

One company that announced it today is in my hometown. It is the Fifth Third Bank. It is kind of an unusual name, Fifth Third, but that makes them distinctive, right? They said today, you know what, we are going to start paying our people a higher entry level pay—instead of 13-something an hour, it is going to be \$15 an hour—and we are going to provide bonuses to other employees who are not affected by that. They are going to

do it right now, and they are doing it because of the tax relief legislation.

So to those who say: Gosh. What about me? I would just say: Look at your paycheck. If you work for one of these businesses that has already made an announcement, of course, you are feeling good about it, but even if you work for another company that maybe is a little quieter about what they are doing—maybe they are not going to make a big announcement—trust me, it is going to be in their interest now, in a competitive market out there, to invest in those companies, to invest in their people, to invest in training, to invest in better equipment, better technology. Those are the sorts of things that, over time, are going to make the biggest difference, I think, in this tax bill.

If you look at what is happening in our economy today, the reason wages are flat—by the way, expenses are not flat. Expenses are up and wages are flat. That is called the middle-class squeeze, and that is very real. What is the biggest expense? For most people, it is healthcare.

The way to deal with that is to get this economy moving and, specifically, to increase the productivity. That is what the economists say; that our productivity is low right now. When you have low productivity, you have low economic growth, and that is what we have had, under 2 percent economic growth. That is not the America I grew up in, and that is not the America I want my kids to grow up in.

By making these investments in better technology, in better equipment, in better training, what happens? You get better productivity, you get higher efficiency, you get the opportunity to increase your business, and therefore hire more people. That is something, I think, over time, will play out and will create the opportunity to lift up everybody.

John F. Kennedy was a Democrat, but he had a lot of things to say that sounded more like what Republicans are talking about today. One thing he said was that “a rising tide lifts all boats.” In the 1960s, he did cut capital gains, by the way, and that tax cut actually generated more economic activity.

Ronald Reagan, in 1986, actually put in place tax reform, with a bipartisan group here in the Congress, that ended up with strong economic growth in the 1980s and the 1990s, but that was 31 years ago. That is the last time we made these kinds of substantive comprehensive changes in the Tax Code. It is past time to do it again.

The final thing I will say about the tax reform proposal is that when you talk to businesses that are competing globally, which is more and more companies, including a lot of smaller companies now, the global economy is upon us. Some people said: Gosh, I wonder when the economy is going to affect me globally? Well, it does. It affects all of us. In your town, wherever it is, and in

your business, wherever you work, you are probably competing directly or indirectly on a global basis.

I will give you an example. There is a little company in my hometown called Standard Textiles. It is a great company. They make linens. It is a company that competes every day globally. In fact, a lot of the companies they compete with, as you can imagine, are companies that make these linens somewhere else—say, in Asia, where traditionally people have been able to find lower costs. Guess what they are looking at now with this tax reform bill: the ability to invest more here in America—American workers, American-made linens. They tell me, as do other companies, that this is going to give them a better competitive situation because no longer are you going to have a tax code that has the highest business rate in the entire industrialized world and an international system that says: If you keep your money overseas rather than bringing it back, when you earn money, you can save on your taxes. That is what resulted in \$2.5 to \$3 trillion being locked out of America and kept overseas.

This tax reform proposal unlocks that. It allows us to bring that money back. People call it repatriation. I guess that is accurate—repatriation. I wish it had never been “unpatriated” in the first place. If you are a patriot, you should want that money to be spent here in America. That is what is going to happen with this tax reform proposal.

It is about the tax cuts for working families—hard-working families who deserve it, who are now stuck in a situation where it is tough to get ahead. This will help immediately.

It is about helping small businesses and other companies here in America to be able to invest more, to be able to write off equipment right away when they buy it, and, as an example, having a lower rate.

It is also about leveling that playing field and saying that America, once again, is going to reposition itself as the leader in the world. Once again, it will be that beacon of opportunity that other countries look to and say: We would like to be like that—a free market economy where people who work hard and play by the rules can get ahead.

You can't say that now with our current Tax Code because workers literally are competing on an unlevel playing field with one hand tied behind their back because of our Tax Code. Three times as many American companies were purchased by foreign companies last year as the other way around. Because of our Tax Code, 4,700 U.S. companies became foreign companies over the last decade or so. That is based on an Ernst & Young study that came out recently that said, if this tax reform proposal we have now passed had been in place, those 4,700 companies would still be American companies.

All of us are patriots here in this body. All of us should want to bring back those jobs to America, repatriate those profits here to America, and give American workers the ability to compete on a level playing field.

I know there were some differences in this legislation. We heard a lot of it from the other side of the aisle, but on this issue, it has been bipartisan in the past. I hope it will be bipartisan going forward to hold these reforms in place so we can show that we have confidence and faith in American workers and that we have confidence that if we give them the right tools—in this case, the right Tax Code to work with—they can compete and they can win. I think we are going to see that.

I think, again, with the hopeful signs we are seeing, even today, of companies providing better pay or benefits or making additional commitments on investments. Even well beyond that, we are going to see, maybe quietly, that it will spread out all over the country in ways that will not be as obvious—in decisions that are going to be made, business budgets that are going to change as a result of this tax reform bill. I am hearing it from small businesses. I am hearing it from the bigger companies that compete directly globally, and I am certainly hearing it from families who are happy to see a little tax break to be able to help them as we go into the holidays.

That is all good news, and I think passing that legislation is really going to help the people I represent.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I also wish to talk about something tonight that was not accomplished. It was not accomplished in this vote we just had, which was the continuing resolution that keeps the government funded until January.

Some of us pushed hard to include various things in this legislation. I understand that some of these items are controversial, and it was hard to get it done because you needed 60 votes tonight. You needed a bipartisan consensus on how to move forward and not shut down the government.

I am not a fan of government shutdowns. They don't work. They are inefficient. They cost the taxpayer more at the end of the day, and they cause a lot of pain in the process.

We had the opportunity to pass certain things tonight that were not controversial. I don't understand why we didn't do it. Some issues, I understand on the spending front, were more controversial. I understand some issues were more controversial in terms of how you deal with the immigration issue. The DACA issue is one that I support resolving. I think we should codify it and resolve that. There were different points of view. People wanted to add different things there.

Let me tell you about one where I don't think there was any disagreement. If we could have passed it tonight, it would have provided a lot of certainty and predictability to families in Ohio and around the country. It is one that passed my committee, the Finance Committee, by a strong vote—not a bipartisan vote but a unanimous vote. That is the Children's Health Insurance Program, or the CHIP program. We passed it with a unanimous vote out of committee.

People say: Well, we need to find pay-fors for it. It is about \$8 billion to do what we did, which is a 5-year extension of the program, providing certainty and predictability to families who tonight are wondering what is going to happen to this program. Are my kids going to have the kind of quality healthcare they can access through the Children's Health Program, or the CHIP program?

There are some pay-fors out there that are, again, bipartisan. A big one, which would cover nearly half of that cost, is one where you simply ensure that the Medicaid Program has more integrity. So if a third-party payer is paying, the Medicaid Program doesn't pay for it. It is a bipartisan issue, and there is an initiative we looked at for this program and could have used.

I don't get this notion that we couldn't pass it because we couldn't find the pay-fors. The pay-fors were there. I don't get it that this was controversial, because it is not. I believe that on both sides of the aisle, we wanted to resolve the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Again, with all the other issues, I understand. It is tough when you have to get to 60 votes and get this passed in order to keep the government operating, which is not a situation we should be in, but we are in. I must tell you, I am very disappointed we were not able to deal with this one issue tonight that has not been controversial and that came out of the committee with a unanimous vote—not bipartisan but unanimous.

CHIP now helps 219,000 Ohio children get the health coverage they need and 9 million children nationwide. Ohio has the tenth largest program, and CHIP has been a leading cause in driving the insurance rate down for Ohio kids. In the case of my home State, we have seen our CHIP funding being questioned because the program was authorized until the end of September. Now it is no longer authorized. We are not sure exactly how much money we have left. We think we have enough to get into February in Ohio. Some States are worried about even getting into January.

Tonight, there was a short-term extension that, as I understand it, will take the program into February, but again, it doesn't provide that long-term certainty that families are looking for.

I must tell you that I am disappointed from what I hear about the

reasons, because I asked on both sides of the aisle, and one reason I got—again, this was leadership on both sides of the aisle—is that we can't do it unless we do other things with it. It is called CHIP—Children's Health Insurance Program—but it shouldn't be a political chip. It should be taken out of politics. It should be something that we deal with separately.

I will just tell you that using it as leverage for other programs is not the way I am going to look at it and not the way we should look at it. We should have passed it tonight. We should have passed it to help protect some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Funding should be a top priority, regardless of your partisan position and regardless of the political climate. It should be out of the political fray.

I urge my colleagues, when we come back after the first of the year, let's make that a priority. Let's bring it to the floor. Let's have a vote. Let's keep it bipartisan. Maybe, it could even be unanimous. Let's give those families in Ohio—the 219,000 kids who depend on it—and the millions of families around this country the peace of mind to know that we are extending this program.

Let's do that 5-year extension, that 5-year authorization we already passed in committee. Let's take it out of this political process and put it where it belongs, which is an issue that every single Member of this body should want to address for the kids they represent.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight on the tax reform and tax cut legislation. I do think it will provide the opportunity for everybody I represent to have a better future and a brighter future.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk on the Children's Health Insurance Program.

SIGNING AUTHORITY

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the junior Senator from Louisiana be authorized to sign duly enrolled bills during today's session of the Senate.

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

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I yield back my time.

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

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

NOMINATIONS REMAINING IN STATUS QUO

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that the list at the desk of

nominations received during the 115th Congress, first session, remain in status quo, notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXXI.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 525, 526, 528, and 530.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Kenneth J. Braithwaite, of Pennsylvania, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Norway; M. Lee McClenny, of Washington, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Paraguay; Brock D. Bierman, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development; and Christopher Ashley Ford, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (International Security and Non-Proliferation).

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Braithwaite, McClenny, Bierman, and Ford nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 311.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert P. Storch, of the District of Columbia, to

be Inspector General of the National Security Agency.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

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

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

The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 456 and 457.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Hester Maria Peirce, of Ohio, to be a Member of the Securities and Exchange Commission for a term expiring June 5, 2020; and Robert J. Jackson, Jr., of New York, to be a Member of the Securities and Exchange Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 5, 2019.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Peirce and Jackson nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 545, 546, and 576.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Timothy R.

Petty, of Indiana, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior; Linda Capuano, of Texas, to be Administrator of the Energy Information Administration; and John G. Vonglis, of New York, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Energy.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Petty, Capuano, and Vonglis nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 578, 503, and 577.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Irving Dennis, of Ohio, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Housing and Urban Development; Suzanne Israel Tufts, of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; and Leonard Wolfson, of Connecticut, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Dennis, Tufts, and Wolfson nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 299.

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

The clerk will report the nomination. The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert Charrow, of Maryland, to be General Counsel of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

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

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

The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: PN1286, PN1287, and PN1288.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Tadd M. Johnson, of Minnesota, to be a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation for a term expiring October 6, 2022; Lisa Johnson-Billy, of Oklahoma, to be a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation for a term expiring August 25, 2018; and Lisa Johnson-Billy, of Oklahoma, to be a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation for a term expiring August 25, 2024.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the nominations be confirmed; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Johnson, Johnson-Billy, and Johnson-Billy nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

NOMINATIONS DISCHARGED

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Environment and Public Works Committee be discharged from consideration of and the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: PN1035, PN1036, PN1037, PN1038, and PN1172.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Kenneth E. Allen, of Kentucky, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2021; A.D. Frazier, of Georgia, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2022; Jeffrey Smith, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2022; James R. Thompson III, of Alabama, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2021; and Christopher Caldwell, of Arkansas, to be Federal Cochairperson, Delta Regional Authority.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order, and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Allen, Frazier, Smith, Thompson, and Caldwell nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 502, 554, 556, 559, and PN1196.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Katherine Brunett McGuire, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor; Kate S. O'Scannlain, of Maryland, to be Solicitor for the Department of Labor; Preston Rutledge, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor; Johnny Collett, of Kentucky, to be Assistant Secretary for Special Edu-

cation and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education; and Douglas Webster, of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Education.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the McGuire, O'Scannlain, Rutledge, Collett, and Webster nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: PN1109.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jon J. Rychalski, of Montana, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

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

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

The nomination was confirmed.

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 HEATHER GOOZE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge

an extraordinary woman from my home State of Illinois.

Heather Gooze lives in Nevada now, but she grew up in the Chicago area. She is a survivor of the worst mass shooting in modern American history. On October 1, she was working as a bartender at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in Las Vegas. She was there when a gunman with his own private arsenal rained down gunfire from a high-rise hotel, murdering 58 innocent people and injuring more than 500 others.

Ms. Gooze testified at a recent Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on "bump stocks," the \$200 accessory that the Las Vegas gunman used to make his assault rifles fire almost as fast as a machine gun.

When she heard the first round of shots, Heather thought it might have been fireworks, but suddenly people were running in every direction. Some were shot; many were covered in blood.

Heather directed wounded and frightened people to an exit. With about 20 other people, she then pushed down a fence to make it easier for people to escape the gunfire.

She could have run to safety herself. Instead, she went back to the bar to try to help people who had been shot and lay wounded on the ground.

One young man had been shot in the head. Heather held a jean jacket to his wound to try to staunch the bleeding. When she dropped the jacket, she used her fingers to try to plug the hole in the young man's head. He died the next day.

She then saw three men trying to move another badly injured man using a metal ladder as a stretcher. Heather reached out to grab a corner of the ladder and help lift it. The young man on the ladder grabbed her hand, squeezed it lightly, and then let go—dead.

Heather looked around, saw other dead bodies lying alone, and decided that she would not leave that young man alone like that.

She stayed with his body for hours, until 3:30 in the morning.

When his cell phone rang, she answered. She told the young man's mother that her only child had died. The young man's girlfriend had escaped the killing field to the safety of a nearby hotel. Heather told her that young woman that the love of her life was gone, but Heather would stay with him and learn for the family where his body would be taken.

At the recent hearing, Heather said that horrific night in Las Vegas made her part of a growing, grieving "family" she had hoped never to join: the American family of survivors and victims of mass shootings.

She said that she has asked herself many times in the days after the shooting why she stayed and risked her life for young men she didn't know and for their grieving families. She said the only answer she could come up with was that she hoped that someone would do the same for her and not leave her alone in the midst of a massacre.

I think that is the same plea that many Americans have for this Congress. They understand that gun safety is a politically heated issue. They understand that there are constitutional and legal questions that are difficult to balance.

They want us to have the courage to take up that debate rationally, responsibly and respectfully.

On an average day, 93 Americans are killed with guns—93 people a day, every day. Over 30,000 Americans a year die from guns. Many more live in daily fear that they could be next.

I hope that we can agree to be more like Heather Gooze, to not abandon our fellow Americans to face that danger and fear of gun violence alone. Supporting Senator FEINSTEIN's bill to ban the sale of "bump stocks" would be a good place to start.

TRIBUTE TO ANGELA McQUEEN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the remarkable courage of a woman from my home State of Illinois.

Her name is Angela McQueen—"Angie"—to her friends and family.

Ms. McQueen teaches math and physical education at Mattoon High School in central Illinois.

In late September, she was in the high school cafeteria when she saw a student pull a semiautomatic handgun from his backpack and start spraying the cafeteria with gunfire.

Ms. McQueen and other teachers at the high school had recently been trained on what to do when faced with the threat of gun violence at school.

It is sad and distressing to think that teachers need such training today, but that is, sadly, the reality. Thank goodness Angie McQueen had that training.

The instant she saw the gun, she lunged and pushed the young man's hand towards the ceiling so he couldn't shoot others.

She said she had only one thought in her head as she acted, as she put it, "You're not going to do this to my kids."

Hundreds of students were in the cafeteria at the time. One student was shot and hospitalized briefly, and another student suffered minor injuries when he was apparently grazed by gunfire.

School and law enforcement officials say that Ms. McQueen's selfless actions likely saved students' lives.

One student who witnessed the incident told a reporter for a local newspaper, "Ms. McQueen is like Chuck Norris, basically. She's a hero."

Angela McQueen is the daughter of two retired teachers. In her biography on the school's website, she was asked to describe why she became a teacher. The first reason she gave: "I wanted to make the world a better place."

She has certainly done that.

Ms. McQueen is modest. She doesn't like being in the spotlight, but she recently allowed the city and families of

Mattoon to thank her publicly at a reception at the school.

Mattoon School superintendent Larry Lilly undoubtedly spoke for many when he said, "We are forever grateful to Angela for her courageous actions that saved the lives of our kids. She was a ray of light in our darkest hour."

"You're not going to do this to my kids." That was what Angela McQueen vowed before she risked her life to disarm a young man with a semiautomatic handgun.

I hope that all Members of Congress will take those words to heart as we debate gun safety and what we can do as a society to protect our children and all Americans from gun violence.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we are a Nation of immigrants. That should be an obvious point, but it bears repeating at a time when our President sees political advantage in trafficking in xenophobic scapegoating. Unless you are Native American, you come from a line of people who come from somewhere else. Indeed, that simple fact is an integral part of the American story.

We are also a nation that believes that anything is possible. Our ancestors and relatives journeyed here because, in America, where you come from does not determine what you can accomplish. In this great country, as long as you work hard and play by the rules, you can achieve your dreams. That itself is the American Dream.

No single group of people embodies these ideals more than our Nation's Dreamers. Dreamers grew up in this country; they were brought here as children. They seek only the opportunity to contribute to our Nation and to be legally recognized as the Americans that they are. Dreamers are our neighbors, our teachers, and our first responders.

Nearly a thousand Dreamers serve in our Armed Forces, risking their lives to defend the only country they have ever known as home. We cannot in good faith claim to care about the American Dream if we neglect to protect the very people who are living it.

Take, for example, Dr. Juan Conde, a DACA recipient and a resident of Vermont. Dr. Conde was born in Mexico and brought to the United States as a child by his mother. In 2007, his mother was tragically taken by cancer. Showing remarkable courage and determination for a young man, this tragedy inspired Dr. Conde to find a way to help cancer patients like his mother; yet he was unable to become an oncologist due to his immigration status. So instead, he decided to obtain a Ph.D. in cancer research from the University of Texas.

Dr. Conde wanted to treat cancer patients, not just study the disease. After receiving DACA status in 2012, he was empowered to pursue his medical degree. He is currently a medical student at University of Vermont's Lanier College of Medicine.

Dr. Conde hopes to spend his life in the United States treating cancer pa-

tients and helping to find a cure for the disease. My hope is that we can make that happen, not just for Dr. Conde but for every other Dreamer. There are almost 800,000 Dreamers like Dr. Conde, all of whom have just as much potential to make our communities and our country truly great. To deny them these opportunities because they were brought here as children is as senseless as it is cruel.

Yet that is the decision the president made. He could have worked with Congress to find a permanent solution for Dreamers while leaving DACA protections in place. Instead, he cast them aside. His administration has made absurd, nonfactual, and offensive arguments in support of that decision ever since. When Attorney General Sessions announced that DACA was being terminated, he argued that the program was an example of the Obama administration's repeated failure to enforce our immigration laws. He argued that such failure caused crime, violence, and even terrorism. During Senate Judiciary Committee hearings, I pressed both the Attorney General and his Department on this point, to name just one Dreamer who was involved in terrorist activity. Of course, they could not, but apparently, fear-mongering is more effective than acknowledging simple truths.

By definition, Dreamers are law-abiding. They seek nothing more than to contribute to our country. If the President refuses to stand with Dreamers, then Congress must. We have done it before in the Senate. Four years ago, 68 Senators, Democrats and Republicans, voted for comprehensive immigration reform legislation that I managed on the Senate floor. That legislation included key protections for Dreamers, including an expedited pathway to citizenship. It is time for the Senate to act again now and for the House to follow suit. The future of Dreamers and the fate of the American Dream itself lies in our hands.

PERU

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly about the unfolding political crisis, which is also a crisis for justice, in Peru.

Peru transitioned to democracy in 2000, after two decades of internal armed conflict and authoritarian rule. The country has made important strides in rebuilding its democratic institutions, consolidating the rule of law, and combating impunity, but today, efforts by a majority in the Peruvian Congress to arbitrarily remove judges from the country's highest court, the Constitutional Tribunal, and to oust the attorney general for courageously doing his job, threaten to undermine those gains and reverse Peru's democratic progress.

As a former prosecutor and the senior Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am especially concerned about the attempt by the majority in

Peru's Congress to impeach Attorney General Pablo Sanchez in the midst of his office's investigation into allegations that the Presidential campaign of Keiko Fujimori received illegal contributions in 2011. The effort to remove Attorney General Sanchez strongly suggests a deliberate strategy to obstruct justice and to undermine the autonomy of the attorney general's office. This would represent a grave setback for hard-fought gains to reestablish an independent judiciary and the rule of law in Peru. It would have serious ramifications for U.S.-Peruvian relations.

Credible allegations of corruption must be thoroughly investigated, without prejudice to party or power, and with due process for the accused. I urge members of Peru's Congress to support those who are acting on behalf of the Peruvian people in the pursuit of truth and justice. Key to this is respect for the autonomy of the office of the attorney general and of the Constitutional Tribunal, institutions that are guarantors of human rights and the rule of law.

PRESS FREEDOM

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we are all too familiar with President Trump's "fake news" mantra, which he has repeatedly used to discredit unfavorable news reports and undermine the credibility of the media in our country.

This mantra and the accompanying threats to freedoms of speech and of the press have now spread far beyond our borders. Autocrats and dictators around the world are enthusiastically using the concept of fake news and the legitimacy granted to it by the President of the United States to further undermine and restrict press freedom and fact-based reporting on corruption, human rights, and other abuses in their own countries.

For example, in response to an Amnesty International report on thousands of military prison deaths in Syria, President Bashar al-Assad remarked, "You can forge anything these days, we are living in a fake news era." Similarly, in response to news reports on persecution of the Rohingya ethnic minority group in Myanmar, an officer in Myanmar's Rakhine state security ministry stated, "There is no such thing as Rohingya. It is fake news."

The list goes on and includes comments from autocratic leaders in the Philippines, Venezuela, Russia, China, and Turkey, among others, who have used the fake news mantra to legitimize harassment, arrests, and prosecutions of journalists.

Last week, the Committee to Protect Journalists, CPJ, released its annual census of imprisoned journalists worldwide, which has hit an historical high of 262. The total does not include the many more journalists who were imprisoned for a period of time during the year before being released prior to the December 1 census. A CPJ statement

published with the report noted that: "Far from isolating repressive countries for their authoritarian behavior, the United States, in particular, has cozied up to strongmen such as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Chinese President Xi Jinping. At the same time, President Donald Trump's nationalistic rhetoric, fixation on Islamic extremism, and insistence on labeling critical media 'fake news' serves to reinforce the framework of accusations and legal charges that allow such leaders to preside over the jailing of journalists."

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution has inspired people around the world for over 200 years. It was reaffirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and versions of it have been included in the constitutions of many countries; yet while the United States has long been a global leader for freedom of expression, the White House is now actively working to undermine press freedom. President Trump's reckless rhetoric has not only harmed our credibility and our reputation, it has emboldened foreign dictators who fear nothing more than for their misdeeds to be exposed by the media. The consequence is journalists threatened and imprisoned, journalists assassinated with impunity, publishers who are intimidated, and the ultimate casualty is the truth.

PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, 2018 marks the 100-year anniversary of the influenza pandemic that killed an estimated 50 million people, including 670,000 Americans. I suspect most people assume that, given the remarkable advances in modern medicine since 1918, nothing so disastrous could happen again, but in fact, it could, and next time, it could be even worse. The spread of infectious diseases and drug resistance, and the accompanying threats to global security, are on the rise, and the international community is woefully underprepared to fight back.

The several large-scale infectious disease outbreaks of the last two decades, including SARS, H1N1, and Ebola, have revealed the extent to which individual countries and the international community at large need to dramatically improve their preparedness to respond to such potentially catastrophic health crises.

The stark reality is that the threat is increasing. An ever-growing, increasingly mobile global population will provide the breeding ground for the emergence and contagion of existing and new infectious diseases.

The potential threats from infectious disease outbreaks include not only catastrophic loss of life, but severe economic harm and social and political instability. The 2014-15 Ebola outbreak, for example, which began with the death of a 2-year-old boy in a remote Guinean village, ultimately killed

more than 11,000 people across six countries, left thousands of children orphaned, caused an estimated economic loss to those countries of nearly \$3 billion, and resulted in many people losing confidence in their country's public health system.

It is important to note that Ebola, which is spread through direct contact and terrified millions of people including in this country, is hardly the most infectious known disease. Several other disease agents, such as measles and influenza, can be spread through the air and can develop into epidemics or pandemics much more rapidly.

That is one of the reasons why many global health experts fear that an infectious disease outbreak far worse than Ebola will occur sometime in the next 20 years and that the number of outbreaks will become more frequent.

Despite improvements in access to safe water and sanitation, vaccine development, and other public health advances to combat infectious diseases, an enormous amount of work remains.

One of the most important lessons learned from the Ebola outbreak is that time is of the essence. The lack of a rapid, coordinated global response resulted in many preventable deaths. Disease surveillance systems were poor or nonexistent in the severely impacted countries, there was a lack of trained personnel to rapidly deploy, and no effective public communication system was in place to inform and update local communities.

An additional problem was the inability to quickly mobilize resources. Countries and NGOs around the globe lacked a reserve of available funds. The Congress took a step toward addressing this issue in the fiscal year 2017 State and foreign operations appropriations bill, which included a \$70 million emergency reserve fund to address infectious disease outbreaks around the globe. In the fiscal year 2018 Senate version of the State and foreign operations bill, Chairman GRAHAM and I included \$130 million for programs to prevent and respond to such emerging health threats.

However, as I have said before and I will say again, far more needs to be done to build the public health infrastructure to prevent and respond to disease pandemics. As the international community works to be more prepared for infectious disease outbreaks, the U.S. should continue to play a leading role in preparedness planning. Unfortunately, President Trump's fiscal year 2018 budget would cut funding for these very programs, including for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which played an indispensable role in responding to the Ebola and Zika outbreaks, as it has to many other international health crises.

It is time we invest and prepare for pandemics in a similar way as we invest and prepare for war, nuclear disasters, or other large-scale threats to global security. The potential consequences are no less serious. I urge

the White House to face up to this reality and dramatically increase funding for these programs at CDC, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other Federal agencies that play a role in global health security.

TRIBUTE TO GARRISON NELSON

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to recognize the achievements and contributions of a renowned political scholar, remarkable educator, and a personal friend. This year, Garrison Nelson will conclude five decades of teaching at the University of Vermont, where he is recognized as a legend in the department of political science.

Garrison, the inaugural Elliott A. Brown Green and Gold Professor of Law, Politics, and Political Behavior, is known by some Members of this body, as well as legislators throughout the country who rely on him to offer political insight. Widely considered a leading expert on congressional history, Garrison has authored more than 150 articles and professional papers on national politics with a major focus on the U.S. Congress and elections in Vermont. His works have educated students worldwide and can be found in close to 500 libraries in the United States and 13 countries around the world.

An Irish native of Boston, Garrison has resided in the Green Mountain State for most of his adult life, adding much richness to the State's political landscape. I have known Garrison since he served as an aide in my office shortly after my first election to the Senate. Garrison is as revered as he is brilliant. His skill and affinity for the esoteric is evident in both his teaching style and his storytelling, perhaps most notably his magnum opus, "John William McCormack: A Political Biography." Works like this one have made significant contributions to our Nation's historical library, offering profiles and untold stories of the political icons of our time. In today's political environment, such citations of success and failure can offer us precious insight into improving our own oath to serve.

As Garrison departs the Old Mill at the University of Vermont at the end of this year, he will leave a legacy that has reached more than 13,000 students. With them and many others, he has shared his appreciation of and reverence for the American political system and the need for participation to ensure the success of our democracy. I am grateful for his commitment to inspire the next generation of political leaders.

In recognition of Garrison's timeless contributions, I ask unanimous consent that an article by Terri Hallenback, appearing in Vermont's own *Seven Days*, about Garrison's achievements be printed in the *RECORD*.

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

[From *Seven Days*, October 18, 2017]

FIFTY YEARS, 13,450 STUDENTS AND 5,000 INTERVIEWS: UVM'S GARRISON NELSON CALLS IT A CAREER

(By Terri Hallenback)

When former Vermont governor Howard Dean ran for president in 2004, national media turned to University of Vermont political science professor Garrison Nelson for insight.

"I think he is an arrogant, ill-tempered schmo who does not play well with others," Nelson told the *Houston Chronicle*.

Many of the same political reporters came back 12 years later, when Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) wanted the job. They called on Nelson to capture the politics and personality of the quirky democratic socialist who'd once been mayor of Burlington.

"Bernie's the last person you'd want to be stuck on a desert island with," Nelson told the *New Yorker* in 2015. "Two weeks of lectures about health care, and you'd look for a shark and dive in."

In his day job, the bearded professor with a booming, Boston-accented voice has spent nearly 50 years bringing dry political facts to life for thousands of students while churning out a steady flow of academic research.

To the broader public, though, Nelson is known as the man to whom journalists both local and national regularly turned for well-informed analysis—and no-holds-barred skewering—of Vermont politicians and their ambitions.

Now, after 13,450 students (including this reporter), 11 books and more than 5,000 media interviews (yes, he keeps track), UVM's most quoted professor is retiring. The 146 students in his two political science classes this semester will be his last.

Nelson is calling an end to a career that has made him one of UVM's most public figures. On campus and off, he has chafed and informed generations of students, politicians and voters. "With full classrooms and multiple book demands at age 75, the pace has become grueling," said Nelson, whose walk has slowed to a shuffle on the well-worn route between his Old Mill office and Lafayette Hall classroom.

Looking back, it's hard to believe that Nelson lasted a full year, let alone five decades, at UVM. He's poked at not just politicians, but university brass. In 1971, as a relatively new, untenured teacher, he protested the politically motivated ouster of a left-wing professor, Michael Parenti; 30 years later, then-tenured Nelson feuded publicly with his university bosses over pay and college leadership.

For a while, Nelson considered leaving UVM. From 1996 to 2002, he worked part-time at Boston area colleges and had designs on landing a full-time job at one of them. But he held on to his tenure and continued to teach in Burlington during that time. He's now one of the university's longest-serving professors.

As he completes his employment, Nelson said he has mellowed. He claims to admire the full slate of university leaders above him. The twice-divorced Nelson remarried this year. He literally beams over the positive reviews of his newly released book, a 910-page tome on the little-remembered 1960s-era U.S. House speaker John McCormack. Nelson refers to the book's publication as the "crowning moment" of his career.

At an official gathering last week to honor his upcoming retirement, Nelson told colleagues that a friend asked him why he wanted to retire now, when things are going so well. "My answer was, 'It won't get any better than this,'" he said.

In the classroom, Nelson is known for turning large numbers of students—including

apolitical ones—on to political history through the stories behind it. He's a natural raconteur, whether the topic is the rise of Woodrow Wilson, the Austin-Boston dominance of the U.S. House or his own Massachusetts roots. Nelson's single mom raised him and his younger half-sister in working-class Lynn after his Communist father left.

"Super paper. Star of the day," Nelson told one young woman as he handed back papers to the 39 students in his Electing the President class last week.

"More sources, Maddie. More sources next time," he told another, also loud enough to be heard by everyone in the room.

Former student Jade Harberg said she liked the way Nelson challenged students with candor and humor. "I appreciated teachers who were willing to shame their students to work harder," the 2013 UVM grad said.

Harberg, who now works for Nelson as a researcher in Washington, D.C., recalled that the professor sent her class an email listing the students who had turned their papers in early and those who had been late. He included a statistical analysis that concluded men were more likely to be tardy than women and told the class, "This is why women are ruling the world."

Nelson gets high marks on the website Rate My Professors. Former students graded him 4 out of 5 in quality, and 89 percent say they would take his course again. But the comments reflect a range of reactions to the professor's personality.

Some called him a "genius," "hilarious" and "extremely helpful." A typical dissenter, on the other hand, concluded: "Pompous, has a weird inferiority complex about not having gone to Harvard."

Clark Bensen, a 1974 UVM grad, said Nelson's intensity helped push him into political science from his math-economics major. "For me, he was a breath of fresh air, or more like a gale-force wind," Bensen said. Today, Bensen still uses the skills Nelson taught him to run Polidata, a Virginia-based firm that analyzes political data.

Nelson made an impression on his colleagues, too. Anthony "Jack" Gierzynski, chair of the UVM political science department, said that when he arrived at the university in 1992, he saw Nelson's students were enthralled by his storytelling.

"At first, I tried to imitate that," Gierzynski said, but he quickly found it didn't work for him. Noting the 2013 retirement of equally charismatic political science professor Frank Bryan, Gierzynski said Nelson is "the last of that breed."

Despite his outsized personality, Nelson has spent a considerable part of his professorial career toiling quietly on detailed research on esoteric subjects. He has produced thick volumes on the membership of congressional committees that may be valuable reference books—albeit not best sellers.

At least one student appreciated that. "The guy has an encyclopedic mind and has done granular research on New England politics," said journalist Scott MacKay, a 1974 grad who has long relied on Nelson's insights—and quotability—as a political reporter in Vermont and Rhode Island.

Nelson had wanted to write a book about McCormack since he met the former House speaker in 1968, just before he started working at UVM. Eleven publishers turned him down—McCormack was a key player in his time but a relatively obscure historical figure—before Bloomsbury Publishing finally offered him a deal. John William McCormack: A Political Biography came out in March.

Such work earns an author academic credibility, but Nelson is more likely to be remembered for his outspoken political commentary. Insisting it "was not a central feature of my UVM life," he explained, "I fell

into it because, apart from my buddy Frank Bryan, others at UVM were reluctant to do it.”

Nelson has been analyzing Vermont politics for print and television journalists since Democrat Phil Hoff sat in the governor’s office in the 1960s. He’s provided plenty of straight, factual observations but over time became known for a spicier variety of analysis.

He admits that he’s dished it out unevenly. Nelson thinks highly of Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), for whom he worked for two years, so Leahy has largely been spared his barbs. He has also generally spoken favorably of the political skills of former U.S. senator Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.) and former Republican governors Jim Douglas and Richard Snelling.

For Sanders, whose political career he’s followed since 1981, Nelson has both criticism and affection. “The difference between Bernie and most of the lefties is, Bernie wants to win,” Nelson said in the October 2015 New Yorker article. “Most lefties don’t want to win, because if you win, you sell out your purity.”

His analysis was acceptable to his daughter, Shyla Nelson Stewart, a Sanders devotee who seconded the senator’s nomination at the Democratic National Convention.

“The most important thing he said was, Bernie has been on the same agenda his entire career,” she said of her dad’s comments, “and that that agenda has caught up with the times.”

Nelson has been harder on Dean and Congressman Peter Welch (D-Vt.).

“I never understood why Howard was running for president other than the fact that Howard wanted to be president,” he said before class one day last month. “It was just Howard’s ego.” Dean did not respond to a message from Seven Days seeking his point of view.

Nelson is slightly less dismissive of Welch. Nelson said their feud started when he made a comment to a reporter during Welch’s 1988 campaign for the Democratic U.S. House nomination, saying Welch’s strategy of concentrating his campaign in southern Vermont was a mistake. “Peter took offense,” Nelson said. When Welch confronted him, Nelson said, he responded with choice words.

Welch insisted last week that he doesn’t remember the incident or Nelson’s specific comments, though he did say the professor was always critical.

“He showed no mercy,” Welch said. “He was extremely good at cutting folks down to a size that was smaller than they thought they deserved.”

Daughter Stewart provides some insight. “What my father has most railed against is anyone who has even the slightest sense of entitlement,” she said of Nelson, who often talks about growing up poor.

Nelson saw that attitude in Dean, who grew up on New York City’s Park Avenue.

“His born-again liberalism has caught a lot of us by surprise—it’s a case of ‘Howard, we hardly knew ye,’” Nelson told the Associated Press in 2003. “He’s really a classic Rockefeller Republican: a fiscal conservative and social liberal.”

His disapproval of Welch, a lawyer from Springfield, Mass., is more complicated. Nelson viewed Welch and his late wife, Joan Smith, as a couple in search of power—his in politics and hers at UVM, where she was dean of the College of Arts and Science and Nelson’s boss.

In a 2001 column, the late Seven Days columnist Peter Freyne wrote, “Nelson told Seven Days that Smith and her husband, former gubernatorial candidate Peter Welch, ‘wanted to be the Democratic Snellings, with Peter holding the governor’s office and Joan holding high office at the university’—a reference to the late Governor Richard Snelling and wife Barbara Snelling, who served as a UVM vice president for many years.”

Nelson does not let go of such opinions easily, nor does he like being on the receiving end of the kind of criticism he so readily doles out to others.

Nelson recalled comments Freyne made about him during Dean’s 2004 presidential campaign. “Peter bashed me in four separate columns,” Nelson said, alleging that Freyne was courting Dean’s campaign in hopes of landing a job.

In one of those columns, Freyne said, “Garrison despises Howard Dean, always has and always will. We suggest it’s all about ego—Nelson’s, not Dean’s.”

Asked why this still roiled him 13 years after Dean’s campaign ended and eight years after Freyne’s death, Nelson said, “I’m Irish, for Chrissakes; I don’t forget anything. Irish Alzheimer’s—you never forget a grudge.”

Nelson doesn’t get as much ink in the newspapers as he once did—which is his choice, he said, because answering questions from reporters takes away from his research time. He didn’t have a lot to say about

former governor Peter Shumlin and has been just as quiet on Gov. Phil Scott and President Donald Trump. But he makes no apologies for comments made over the years about politicians, students or his bosses.

“When you’re an outspoken person, you’re going to piss people off. I’ve pissed people off,” Nelson said. “But I’m still here—50 years.”

BUDGETARY REVISIONS

Mr. ENZI. Mr President, section 251 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, BBEDCA, establishes statutory limits on discretionary spending and allows for various adjustments to those limits, while sections 302 and 314(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 allow the chairman of the Budget Committee to establish and make revisions to allocations, aggregates, and levels consistent with those adjustments. The Senate is considering the House Amendment to H.R. 1370, the Further Additional Continuing Appropriations Act, 2018, which provides emergency funding for national security accounts.

This legislation includes language that increases security discretionary budget authority by \$4,686 million this year and designates it as emergency funding pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A)(1) of BBEDCA. CBO estimates that this budget authority will increase discretionary outlays by \$803 million in 2018.

As a result of the aforementioned designations, I am revising the allocation to the Committee on Appropriations by increasing the revised security budget authority limit by \$4,686 million and outlays by \$803 million this year. Further, I am increasing the budgetary aggregates for 2018 by those same amounts.

I ask unanimous consent that the accompanying tables, which provide details about the adjustment, be printed in the RECORD.

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

REVISION TO BUDGETARY AGGREGATES—(PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 311 AND 314(a) OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET ACT OF 1974)

[\$ in millions]

	2018
Current Spending Aggregates:	
Budget Authority	3,080,461
Outlays	3,100,621
Adjustments:	
Budget Authority	4,686
Outlays	803
Revised Spending Aggregates:	
Budget Authority	3,085,147
Outlays	3,101,424

REVISION TO SPENDING ALLOCATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018—(PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 302 AND 314(a) OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET ACT OF 1974)

[\$ in millions]

	2018
Current Allocation:	
Revised Security Discretionary Budget Authority	549,057
Revised Nonsecurity Category Discretionary Budget Authority	552,266
General Purpose Outlays	1,187,547
Adjustments:	
Revised Security Discretionary Budget Authority	4,686
Revised Nonsecurity Category Discretionary Budget Authority	0
General Purpose Outlays	803
Revised Allocation:	
Revised Security Discretionary Budget Authority	553,743

REVISION TO SPENDING ALLOCATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018—(PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 302 AND 314(a) OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET ACT OF 1974)—Continued
(\$ in millions)

	2018				
Revised Nonsecurity Category Discretionary Budget Authority					552,266
General Purpose Outlays					1,188,350
	OCO	Program Integrity	Disaster Relief	Emergency	Total
Memorandum Detail of Adjustments Made Above:					
Revised Security Discretionary Budget Authority	0	0	0	4,686	4,686
Revised Nonsecurity Category Discretionary Budget Authority	0	0	0	0	0
General Purpose Outlays	0	0	0	803	803

TRIBUTE TO LUTHER STRANGE
Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, today I wish to honor my good friend and colleague from Alabama, Senator LUTHER STRANGE, prior to his departure from the U.S. Senate.

While LUTHER and I have worked closely together in the Senate, our friendship dates back nearly four decades. Over the years, I have had the privilege of not only getting to know LUTHER, but also getting to know his wife, Melissa, and his two sons, Luke and Keehn.

Even before LUTHER was appointed to the U.S. Senate, he and I worked alongside each other throughout much of our careers. When LUTHER was sworn in to fill Attorney General Sessions' seat, I was pleased to have him just down the hall from my office.

As soon as LUTHER was sworn into the Senate, he hit the ground running. His camaraderie, integrity, and great attitude did not go unnoticed. Another thing we all quickly observed about LUTHER in the Senate was his willingness to help in any situation. He was always the first to volunteer, whether the task be big or small. LUTHER is admired by Members on both sides of the aisle, which is rare in Washington. He has made a lot of friends in the Senate and has worked in a bipartisan fashion.

In addition to his work ethic and great attitude, LUTHER was able to accomplish an incredible amount legislatively in a short period of time. His successes include his work on the final National Defense Authorization Act conference negotiations, securing three littoral combat ships, his help in achieving the 51 votes needed to pass a once-in-a-generation tax reform package, and helping repeal Obamacare.

LUTHER's time in the Senate was cut too short. I would be remiss not to mention how much I, along with my Senate colleagues, have enjoyed his company.

I thank Senator STRANGE for his time and service both to Alabama and our Nation here in the Senate. I wish him all the best in his future endeavors, and I look forward to continuing our close friendship.

Thank you.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this week Congress sent the President a tax reform bill that will translate into real relief for American families.

I have spent a lot of time on the floor of the Senate talking about how this

bill will benefit these families in South Dakota and around the country.

Today I would like to take a few minutes to recognize the hard work of those Members and staff who made the legislative goal of tax reform a reality.

First, thank you to Senator Hatch for his leadership and members of the Finance Committee for a job well done. Numerous hearings, member meetings, and a lot of compromise helped us get this bill to the finish line.

As a result, the contributions and priorities of each member of the Finance Committee and, frankly, those of the entire conference are reflected in the final product.

Having once served as a staffer here myself, I would like to recognize the many staff members who contributed to this product.

Mark Warren, who serves as my tax counsel, has put in countless hours on this legislation.

It has not been unusual over the last several months to find him in his office when I arrive at work before 7 a.m. and still at his desk late into the evening. With decades of experience, including time spent at the House Ways and Means Committee and at the Treasury Department, I and other members of the committee and conference relied heavily on Mark's intricate knowledge of tax policy as we crafted this legislation.

He worked very hard to help me advance priorities in this legislation including provisions benefiting small businesses, farmers, and ranchers. Thanks in no small part to his efforts, we successfully delivered a tax reform bill that will work for them. Time spent at the office is time away from family. I am grateful to both him and his family for his efforts.

I would also like to thank my legislative director, Jessica McBride, and my staff director, Brendon Plack. Brendon is a native of Madison, SD, and has been with my office for over 12 years. Jessica is a native of Miller, SD, and has been with my office for 8 years. Their work, advice, and counsel were invaluable as we moved this bill across the finish line.

I would also like to recognize a few other staff members for their hard work: Jay Khosla, Mark Prater, Jeff Wrase, Nick Wyatt, Matt Hoffman, Tony Coughlan, Eric Oman, Jen Acuna, Marty Pippins, Alex Monie, Preston Rutledge, Bryan Hickman, Brendan Dunn, and Monica Popp.

I would also like to recognize Senator Toomey's tax staff member,

Randy Herdon, Senator Portman's tax staffer, Zach Rudisill, and Senator Scott's tax staffer, Shay Hawkins.

I know many of them over the last few months were running on very little sleep and perhaps missing important events at home with family and friends in order to be here at work. Nevertheless, they were patient, thoughtful, and tireless in their efforts because they knew the work was important and the impact would be significant.

We have all benefited from their wise counsel and have a better product for it.

Early next year, this legislation is going to have a real impact on people's lives across this country. Their hard work and contributions helped make it possible. They all worked incredibly hard and should be very proud of the work you have done on behalf of the American people.

I thank them for their service, and congratulations on a job well done.

CONFIRMATION OF JAMES C. HO

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I wish to voice my disappointment that Mr. James Ho was confirmed to serve as a judge on the Fifth Circuit.

While at the Department of Justice, Mr. Ho wrote a memo that the George W. Bush administration used to greenlight the CIA's use of torture. Furthermore, Mr. Ho's comments on campaign finance reveal a common thread among Trump judicial nominees that I find particularly disturbing.

Mr. Ho argued that some of the detainees held by the U.S. at Guantanamo were not protected under the Geneva Convention. The memo Mr. Ho wrote allowed the CIA to use interrogation techniques banned by the Geneva Convention that caused the death of a detainee. The interrogation techniques Mr. Ho claimed were legal were ineffective and their use hidden from lawmakers. As my colleague Senator MCCAIN said when he introduced an amendment to reaffirm our government's prohibition on torture in 2015, "Our enemies act without conscience. We must not."

I am also deeply concerned by Mr. Ho's radical views on money in politics. Mr. Ho has said, "For truly radical but effective reform, we must reverse course and abolish all restrictions on campaign finance." The overwhelming majority of Americans, both Republicans and Democrats, disagree strongly with Mr. Ho and believe that

unlimited, unattributable amounts in money in politics corrupts our political system. Our political finance systems has been flooded with secret, corporate money since the 5-4 ruling in *Citizens United*. Mr. Ho's opinion on campaign finance favors corporations and the wealthy who use money to yield influence and shape policy.

Unfortunately, Mr. Ho is not the only Trump judicial nominee who has espoused such extreme views. Every single nominee has come from a preapproved list created by the Heritage Foundation and the Federalist Society. This intellectual hegemony will harm Americans seeking redress in the courts. Recently, three judicial nominees withdrew their names from consideration after the American public learned how inexperienced and unfit they were for a lifetime appointment. I encourage the Trump administration to submit mainstream nominees and to stop outsourcing our judicial system to rightwing think tanks.

SPECIAL COUNSEL MUELLER

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, today I wish to commend Robert Mueller's career as a public servant and to condemn partisan, political attacks on Mr. Mueller's reputation and American democratic systems.

A brief glance at Mr. Mueller's biography reflects his consistent commitment to serve the American people with honor and courage. As a young man, Mr. Mueller served with distinction in the Vietnam war. His list of commendations and military decorations, including a Bronze Star, two Navy Commendation Medals, the Purple Heart, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, are emblematic of his leadership and exemplary service.

Mr. Mueller not only fought courageously on the battlefield, but upon returning home and earning his law degree, he continued serving his country throughout his legal career. He cut his teeth working in U.S. attorney's offices in Boston and San Francisco for over a decade, and when he later served at the Department of Justice, Mr. Mueller was nominated by President George H. W. Bush to lead the criminal division, where he oversaw cases as diverse as the prosecution of Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega and the Lockerbie bombing.

In 1995, Mr. Mueller's dedication to public service led him to leave a high-paying position at a private firm to join the DC U.S. attorney's office homicide division to hold violent offenders accountable for their crimes. Three years later, he became a U.S. attorney himself, serving in San Francisco and earning himself a reputation as a dogged and fair prosecutor committed to enforcing the rule of law.

In 2001, Mr. Mueller was nominated by a second Republican President, George W. Bush, as the Director of the FBI, a position to which he was confirmed unanimously by this body.

Whether navigating our response to the atrocities of 9/11, leading the Bureau's reform in its aftermath, or trailblazing the Bureau's role in combating cyber crimes, his tenure has been widely lauded. In fact, in 2011, as his 10-year term was set to end, we in the Senate voted 100 to 0 to extend his term until 2013.

In an era of increasing political and cultural tribalism, each time Mr. Mueller has been named or nominated for a new position, he has received bipartisan and unabashed praise—and rightly so.

Mr. Mueller, as an expert in law enforcement, could not be better suited for the task at hand: an investigation into Russia's interference in the U.S. elections. That Russia interfered in our elections is neither conjecture nor an attempt to rewrite the political outcomes of 2016. It is a fact that was true for the U.S. and many European allies in the last year and will remain a serious risk to the validity of our future elections if we do not take action. Mr. Mueller's investigation will serve as a necessary step to secure the ability of Americans to cast their vote in confidence for those who will represent them in Washington. Nothing could be more sacred or more American.

Serious, prudent, and thorough congressional oversight is always appropriate. Reckless, partisan attacks on the integrity of an honest public servant are not the same as congressional oversight. Attacks like these embolden our enemies, animate opponents of democracy, and inspire terrorists. These attacks are nothing short of unpatriotic.

I call on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to stand up for the integrity of the process that Mr. Mueller is leading. Skepticism of the outcomes of his investigation triggered by dishonest smears on Mr. Mueller's reputation by Washington politicians would have lasting results and would compromise the ability of law enforcement to protect U.S. from our enemies, foreign and domestic.

SAFE SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak about "A Beautiful Here," a memoir by Linda Phillips that chronicles her struggle to overcome the extraordinary grief of losing her son, Nuci, to suicide following his long battle with depression.

Linda writes about an empathetic, caring, and happy child who grows increasingly distressed through adolescence. Nuci retreated from their close-knit family and, despite their efforts to support him through several periods of crisis and treatments, he succumbed to his disease.

Though the family was distraught and heartbroken by Nuci's death, Linda Phillips was also appalled at the lack of supports for individuals struggling with suicide and for families who have lost loved ones to depression.

At multiple points, Nuci failed to receive services or the compassionate support he needed. Indeed, after calling a crisis hotline while in college, Nuci was taken into custody by police and placed in handcuffs. Ultimately, the incident resulted in his expulsion. On another occasion, he was told to wait over a month for services when seeking support for his depression while in school.

Linda also saw other families pull their children from much-needed treatment programs because they could not afford the costly care. She saw firsthand that survivors of suicide are often relegated to the shadows, met by uncomfortable silence, or blamed for their loved ones' deaths.

Linda's personal account sheds light on this tragic and pervasive problem. Though Nuci Phillips took his own life 20 years ago, his story, sadly, remains just as relevant today.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention reports that nearly 36,000 American's die by suicide each year; that is one American every 15 minutes. According to the Center for Disease Control, CDC, suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 10 and 24 and results in approximately 4,600 lives lost each year.

In recent years, a shocking number of young people have attempted or ended their life through suicide as a result of bullying. Though not all instances of bullying lead to suicide, bully victims are between two to nine times more likely to consider suicide than nonvictims, according to studies by Yale University.

Nearly one in four students aged 12 to 18 are affected by bullying and harassment, according to recent data from the Department of Education. Another Department study estimates that 60,000 students in the U.S. do not attend school each day because they fear being bullied. Bullying and harassment are a significant problem in our schools.

These are issues that we can begin to address today by confronting bullying in our schools through strong antibullying policies. In far too many communities, whether in Pennsylvania or across the Nation, we are forced to deal with tragic consequences of bullying or harassment when these policies or organizations do not exist. Other resources include school counselors and crisis hotlines.

My bill, the Safe Schools Improvement Act, may not prevent all incidences of bullying, but it is an important step in the direction of tackling this problem and holding school districts accountable.

Depression and suicide, whether brought on by bullying or not, is a serious disease with potentially deadly results. More teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease combined.

We must fight against this destructive illness by ensuring all children and young adults have access to affordable and effective mental health treatment and services, such as counseling, medication, and crisis intervention. I would like to thank Linda Phillips for sharing her story and helping to shine a light on this pervasive disease.

REMEMBERING LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL CHARLES SHORT

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, as co-chair of the Air Force Caucus, I rise to pay tribute to Lt. Gen. Michael C. Short, who served this country faithfully for over 51 years, 35 years as an Air Force fighter pilot and another 16 years as an Air Force and joint senior mentor to leaders and future leaders of our military. Lieutenant General Short passed away on 27 October after a battle with cancer, and for those who knew him, it is the only battle he ever lost.

Born in Princeton, NJ, on 24 February 1944, Lieutenant General Short was the only child of Janet MacDonald Short and Charles Francis Short. He grew up in a military family and lived in New Jersey, North Carolina, Japan, Kentucky, Mississippi, and France. Lieutenant General Short's father, Charles, was a paratrooper and a member of the 82nd Airborne Division. When Lieutenant General Short was born, his father was stationed in England preparing for the D-Day invasion. On 6 June 1944, Charles Short jumped into occupied France as a member of the 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and helped liberate Europe from Nazi Germany.

As most military children, Lieutenant General Short attended several schools growing up and excelled athletically and academically at every one. He attended high school in France, participating on his school's football, basketball and baseball teams, and graduating at the top of his class. Lieutenant General Short applied for and was accepted into the U.S. Air Force Academy, entering as a basic cadet on 26 June 1961.

In February 1965, then-Cadet First Class Short met the love of his life, Virginia Suhonen, a fourth-grade school teacher, in Manitou Springs, CO. Lieutenant General Short graduated the Air Force Academy on 6 June 1965 and married Jini on 14 August 1965, and together, they began an incredible journey of partnership and selfless service to each other and our Nation that lasted 52 years.

Their first of 23 assignments began at Webb Air Force Base in Texas, where he attended pilot training. Follow-on assignments included Arizona, South Vietnam, Florida, Minnesota, Colorado, Washington, Thailand, Philippines, the Pentagon, North Carolina, Nevada, Texas, Virginia, Germany, and Italy. Along the way, they grew their family, with Jini giving birth to a son,

Christopher, and daughter, Jennifer. They lovingly welcomed in their daughter-in-law Brooke and son-in-law Scott, and celebrated the birth of five grandchildren, Emily, Rachel, Sara, Jacob, and Katie. Of course, no family is complete without its pets and those who knew the Shorts will always remember Hobo, Bogie, and Muppet. Lieutenant General Short understood the importance of family and was a devoted son, husband, father, and grandfather. He was also an airmen's airman.

Lieutenant General Short exemplified what the Nation should demand of its military members and senior leaders. He was a master in the profession of arms, a master of employing the military tool of national power, and a master instructor to generations of officers who continue to follow him and keep his legacy alive in service to our Nation. Upon earning his silver wings, he began a flying career focused on fighter aviation. He amassed over 4,600 flying hours and flew the F-4C, F-4D, F-4E, RF-4C, F-102, F-106, A-7, F-117, A-10, F-15E, and F-16. He flew 276 combat missions over Vietnam in the F-4, flew and commanded combat missions during Desert Storm in the F-15E, and directed over 35,000 combat missions during Operation Allied Force over Yugoslavia.

In 1969, then-Captain Short, an F-4C pilot, was awarded the Silver Star for courageous action in Vietnam. General Short was enroute to a target in North Vietnam when he was diverted to support an F-105 pilot that was shot down, had ejected, and was in the water off the coast of North Vietnam. He was tasked to take out the antiaircraft artillery sites that had shot down the F-105 so they could bring in the rescue aircraft. Both he and his wingman were hit multiple times by antiaircraft artillery but were able to make it back to base safely after delivering all their rockets on target, knocking out the gun sites, and enabling the rescue of the downed F-105 pilot.

In 1986, then-Colonel Short was hand-picked to be the operations group commander of the 4450th Tactical Group at Nellis Air Force Base, which operated the highly classified F-117A stealth fighter. He soloed in the F-117A on 14 January 1986, Bandit 199, and commanded the group until 1988.

In 1995, Lieutenant General Short was the chief of staff to the commander of NATO's Allied Air Forces Southern Europe in Naples, Italy, during Operation Deliberate Force, NATO's first air campaign, that brought the war in Bosnian-Herzegovina to an end. The following year, as the director of operations for U.S. Air Forces in Europe, he was responsible for the deployment and sustainment of NATO forces and their equipment in Bosnia-Herzegovina during and after Operation Joint Endeavour. Gen George Joulwan, the then-Supreme Commander Europe, said, "He did the planning for the bombing of Bosnia in 1995 and then,

when we put the force into Bosnia, he was critical coordinating the air transport. He was impressive because he was not only professional but innovative—this was all new stuff."

In 1998, Lieutenant General Short returned to Naples, Italy, now as the commander NATO's Allied Air Forces Southern Europe, leading the 19-member NATO alliance and directing all air operations in southern Europe. It was during this time our Nation called on General Short's expertise in the employment of military power to try and achieve peace. Lieutenant General Short, who always left political discussions to others, was directed to travel with Richard Holbrooke to Belgrade, Serbia, to be part of negotiations with Federal Republic of Yugoslavian President Slobadan Milosevic. During the meeting, President Milosevic leaned forward and said to Lieutenant General Short, "So, you are the man who is going to bomb me." Lieutenant General Short replied, "Well, I hope that won't be the case. I have a plan to propose to your generals that will prevent your country from being bombed, but in essence, you're right. I have U-2s in one hand and B-52s in the other, and the choice is up to you." His statement broke the tension, and the discussions went on from there. The negotiations successfully postponed the war, but on 24 March 1999, Lieutenant General Short was directed to begin air operations against Yugoslavia. He successfully executed Operation Allied Force, a 78-day NATO bombing effort to stop the Serbian ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Kosovo.

Lieutenant General Short received a bachelor of science degree from the Air Force Academy, a master's degree in systems management from the University of Southern California, was a distinguished graduate of Air Command and Staff College and attended the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in Washington, DC. His decorations include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal with one oakleaf cluster, the AF Distinguished Service Medal with one oakleaf cluster, the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oakleaf cluster, and the Air Medal with fourteen oakleaf clusters. In 1999, he was presented the Air Force Association's highest honor to a military member in the field of national security, the H.H. Arnold Award for commanding the air campaign during Operation Allied Force.

Lieutenant General Short retired on 1 July 2000 and began 16 years of work as an Air Force and joint senior mentor focusing on the command and control of airpower. Lieutenant General Short was known and respected by servicemembers from all services in the United States, as well as our allies. He always gave clear, hard-hitting advice, passing on his knowledge of things he did right and things he did wrong. He traveled to the Republic of Korea, Qatar, and many other locations to advise, teach and train airmen

of all ranks in the art of “operational” level warfare. Long after the senior mentor ranks thinned, due to intense scrutiny and significant pay cuts, Lieutenant General Short stuck with the program because it was his passion.

Lieutenant General Short touched many lives as evidenced by comments written about him by those who knew and served with him:

“He was a father, a husband, a grandfather and what made it all work was his complete devotion to those he loved and commanded. It was an honor to serve alongside him.”

“High standards, demanding, but fair. You knew where the bar was and he challenged you to exceed it. He pushed me to limits I did not know I could reach.”

“He was a no-nonsense leader who let his Commanders command. He was also a hands-on mentor who touched thousands; admired by all and will be greatly missed.”

“A superb officer, great warrior and outstanding teacher.”

“A great leader . . . as the Air Boss for Operation Allied Force he provided clear guidance and support for me and the men and women in my deployed Wing . . . I consider it a high honor to have served under him in combat!”

“He really was the kind of leader that made you want to work for the organization and its goals. His name always comes up when we talk about the good men in those days.”

“General Mike Short was a great leader and Patriot. He was a mentor and more importantly a friend. Mike loved his Family and his Country . . . he will be missed.”

“He did a superb job in a very tough situation. With leadership and top cover like that, the U.S. Air Force is unstoppable.”

“I will miss your words as they were always on target and well understood. Rolling a nickel on the grass in your remembrance, sir.”

I extend my heartfelt thanks to Lt. Gen. Mike Short for his selfless service to this Nation, to his wife, Jini, and to his children, Chris and Jenn, and their families, for a lifetime of service to this Nation. Words cannot describe the extraordinary character of Lieutenant General Short, his accomplishments, or the lasting impact he will have on generations of service members. His personal accomplishments live on through the examples set by his son and daughter, two highly capable and highly respected Air Force senior officers. My prayers are with his family, and I pray the “Lord Guard and Guide the Men Who Fly.”

TRIBUTE TO ALBERT RATNER

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the 90th birthday of Albert Ratner on December 26, 2017. Albert has lived a life of faith and service. Whether as a loving father, life-long philanthropist, or a successful businessman at Forest City Realty Trust, Albert has worked tirelessly for his community.

Over his career, Albert has shown a particular passion for giving back to the Jewish community, improving our schools, and supporting innovation at the community level.

In Denver, Albert led the charge to transform the Stapleton Airport into a thriving community center with high-quality, affordable housing, green spaces, and new schools. Among those schools is Denver's Science and Technology High School, which has attracted many brilliant students over the last 13 years. Albert's work to revitalize downtown areas across the country have earned him numerous awards, including the National Building Museum Honor Award, the Urban Land Institute's J. C. Nichols Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development, and the Michigan State University's Distinguished Alumni Award.

Albert is the proud father of Deborah and Brian, who follow his lifelong values of service, community, and faith. He is also a loving husband to Audrey, his wife of 36 years, and before that, to his first wife, Faye, who tragically died in an automobile accident. On Albert's 90th birthday, we celebrate his accomplished life, one defined by good humor, compassion, family, and faith.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I want to recognize the upcoming 90th birthday of Albert Ratner on December 26. Albert has led a distinguished life that has touched and benefited countless people in Ohio and around the world.

I consider Albert a dear friend and a wise adviser, and Jane and I have enjoyed the friendship of him and his wife, Audrey, over the years. Whether it is a discussion over dinner or catching up during a Cavs game, we treasure our time with Albert and Audrey.

Albert grew up in Cleveland during the Great Depression, where his family, who were immigrants from Poland, turned a small company into a thriving business through hard work and dedication. Well known for his civic involvement in Cleveland and as a leader in the Jewish community, Albert is a life trustee of the Cleveland Jewish Community Federation and a member of the International Council of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The Ratner family was instrumental in establishing the Cleveland Jewish Archives at the Western Reserve Historical Society in 1976.

Albert is currently engaged in a series of poverty-related initiatives in his hometown of Cleveland and throughout the State in partnership with the Governor and local leaders. Beyond his influence in Ohio, he has helped those in need across the country by supporting innovative educational initiatives that have given promising youth access to an education that has opened doors for each of them.

Albert is a loving husband and father. He has been married to Audrey for 36 years. His first wife, Faye, who he met in high school, was tragically killed in an automobile accident, after which he continued raising his daughter

Deborah and son Brian to follow in his footsteps as fully engaged members of their community. He has lived a life of kindness, cheerfulness, and compassion for all of our fellow citizens.

Albert's life has been guided by a love for his Jewish traditions. He often talks about the Jewish tradition of tikkun olam, to repair the world, and how even when the obligation seems too great, we must not desist from it. That is how he lives. He is truly a great American.

Happy birthday to Albert Ratner.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HYDRAULIC INSTITUTE

● Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Hydraulic Institute and pay tribute to the exceptional role that pump manufacturers have played in improving the delivery of water to American homes, American industry, and American agriculture over the past century. Today pump systems touch the lives of every American, and the Hydraulic Institute plays a central role in developing the policies and standards needed for safe, reliable, and efficient pump operations.

On April 18, 1917, the Nation's leading pump manufacturers met in the La Salle Hotel in Chicago for the purpose of forming a trade association that would “promote friendship and cooperation among manufacturers in improving overall pump performance.” Since this auspicious gathering of pump manufacturers, government agencies have relied on the Hydraulic Institute to provide the technical expertise required to set pump standards that reflect the evolving priorities of society.

In recent years, energy efficiency has emerged as a national priority, and the Hydraulic Institute has worked closely with the U.S. Department of Energy to improve the efficiency of pumping systems. These systems now account for over 20 percent of domestic electrical energy use and the standards, laboratory testing, and labeling advanced by the Hydraulic Institute will ultimately save consumers and businesses billions of dollars.

Pumping systems protect our communities from flooding and fires, deliver drinking water to our homes, irrigate our farms, and bring water and fuel to American manufacturers. The Hydraulic Institute works closely with Congress to ensure that the laws governing energy, water, and infrastructure reflect the prominence of pumping systems in the management of these essential resources. I would like to specifically applaud the Hydraulic Institute for bringing an important perspective to congressional deliberations on how to thoughtfully increase investment in our Nation's critical water infrastructure.

It is with sincere admiration that I stand today to acknowledge the 100th anniversary of the Hydraulic Institute and to wish this exceptional organization continued success in developing policies and advancing standards that improve the lives of every American.●

RECOGNIZING GLASGOW, MONTANA

● Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week, I have the distinct honor of recognizing the community of Glasgow for leading the way with their generosity during the holiday season. Earlier this month, members of the community successfully conducted their annual Block of Bucks program to help raise funds for local families to have warm clothing during the winter months.

This charitable effort brought together a broad collection of the community, including the Glasgow Soroptimists, student council leaders from Glasgow High School, members of the National Guard, the local Elks Club, a host of local businesses, and dozens of other volunteers. Through their focused actions, the community of Glasgow raised over \$30,000 to provide more than 300 hundred children with winter clothing. If you have ever experienced winter along the Hi-Line in northeast Montana, you will know how important it is to have the proper gear. The generosity of neighbors in towns like Glasgow is something that we can all appreciate.

It is a Montana hallmark for neighbors to identify a need and then gather the people and resources to meet that need at a local level. Going into Christmas, I would like to offer a heartfelt thank you to the folks in Glasgow for giving their time and talents to help others by adding warmth to the holiday season.●

TRIBUTE TO SUELLYN WRIGHT NOVAK

● Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, Suellen Wright Novak of Eagle River, AK, retired from the Air Force with the rank of colonel in 2003 after a distinguished 32-year career in the biomedical field. She was commander of three different medical squadrons, a clinical laboratory officer, and leader of the Air Force Blood Program worldwide. She returned home to begin a second career as a professional volunteer. At one time, she held 26 different volunteer positions.

Suellen's work with the Eagle River Presbyterian Church, the Chugiak/Eagle River Chamber of Commerce, and the American Heart Association cannot go unmentioned, nor can we ignore her work as a service officer for VFW Post 9785 or the Alaska State Veterans Advisory Council, but Suellen is best known for her work as the president and executive director of the Alaska Veterans Museum.

Suellen officially retired from this second career in October, handing the

reins over to Mike Waller. In early 2018, the Alaska Veterans Museum will host an event to commemorate her service in January. I want to take a few moments to express my appreciation to Suellen for her service to our Nation and to those who have served it.

Alaska takes great pride in its standing as the State which hosts more veterans per capita than any other. About 70,000 veterans call Alaska home. It is fitting that Alaska host a museum honoring the service and sacrifice of our veterans. Suellen is best known for taking the Alaska Veterans Museum from idea to reality. In 2005 she began collecting oral histories of veterans from all conflicts. She took on additional roles as researcher, display designer, fundraiser, grant writer, and membership chair. The museum was virtual at that point. It organized exhibits for the Anchorage Museum, the Alaska Native Heritage Center, and the Anchorage libraries, but didn't have a space of its own. It was Suellen's vision to move the museum from a virtual space to a physical space in downtown Anchorage. She raised funds and worked with realtors to secure a prime affordable location. And once that location was secured, Suellen recruited a handpicked team to get the museum open in just 11 days. The Alaska Veterans Museum opened on April 17, 2011.

Suellen staffed the museum during nearly all the hours it was open—except when she might be in an elementary school classroom presenting as a Continental soldier during the American Revolution or speaking about how those who fought for America's independence survived the battle or when she was coordinating "Fan Mail" to the troops. The Alaska Veterans Museum, I am told, sends more fan mail to troops than any other small organization in the United States. Suellen's impact in recognizing and supporting our veterans and Active-Duty servicemembers is remarkable.

One of the most remarkable examples of Suellen's determination involves her efforts to place a memorial in the village of Attu in memory of those who lost their lives during the Forgotten Battle of World War II. Suellen and the museum raised the necessary funds to create the replacement memorial but had no way of transporting it all the way out to Attu. Attu is the furthest of the U.S. Aleutian Islands, nearly 1,500 air miles from Anchorage.

Fortunately, the U.S. Coast Guard offered a flight for me to tour their Loran Station on Attu. I recognized the opportunity to offer assistance to Suellen and the museum. I can proudly claim that the new memorial was erected at the site where the former residents of Attu lived. Our mission was a success with the collaborative efforts of Suellen, the museum, and the Coast Guard.

I could go on and on about all that Suellen does, but the list would undoubtedly be incomplete. I think my

colleagues have by now gotten the idea that Suellen is our "Energizer Bunny" extraordinaire. So on behalf of a very grateful Senate, I express appreciation to Suellen for both of her careers: an exceptional Air Force career followed by a career of outstanding volunteer service to our community.●

TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH DARNELL

● Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I want to say a few words about someone in Alaska who has been very important in my State. Joseph Darnell, who we know as Joe, is the Alaska Regional Solicitor for the Department of the Interior, in Anchorage, AL. He has been in that office since 1992, was made acting regional solicitor in 2010, and was appointed to his current position in 2013. He will be retiring from his job at the end of this year.

The Department of the Interior is Alaska's largest landlord, managing 61 percent of Alaska's lands. The way the Department of the Interior manages its lands and resources is critical for Alaska's economy and for the well-being of our citizens.

I know that I often talk about Federal overreach, and while it is true that, under certain administrations, Alaska has bared the brunt of much of that overreach, but it was people like Joe who made sure that rules and regulations were followed, that the people had a voice, and worked to see that good policy prevailed. A former staff member for the late great Senator Ted Stevens, Joe learned from the best.

During his tenure, Joe worked on numerous land management and land conveyance issues for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Refuge System, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service. Among the more notable was the land exchange between the United States and the Aleut Corporation, which resulted in the Aleut Corporation acquiring ownership of the closed Adak Naval Air Facility on Adak Island in the Aleutian Islands.

Joe was born in Seward and raised in Juneau, Kenai, and Fairbanks. According to his wife, Joan, they enjoy cross-country skiing, riding bicycles together, and spending time in their cabin outside of McCarthy. One of his great passions is small airplanes. After the first of the year, they will both be spending a lot of time in their Cessna 175, flying across the great State of Alaska, and watching their daughter Anna ski for the ski for the Nanooks at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Through his decades of dedication, Joe acquired and maintained a peerless understanding of how both national and Alaska-specific laws operate on our Federal public lands in Alaska. He has advised on and navigated a great many challenges for our State during his time in public service, and his knowledge and contribution will be dearly missed.

Best of luck to him and to his family and thanks for all he has done for all of us.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Cuccia, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting nominations which were referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

(The message received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES

REPORT RELATIVE TO THE ISSUANCE OF AN EXECUTIVE ORDER DECLARING A NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO THE UNUSUAL AND EXTRAORDINARY THREAT TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY, FOREIGN POLICY, AND ECONOMY OF THE UNITED STATES POSED BY SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE AND CORRUPTION AROUND THE WORLD—PM 23

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

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, as amended (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued the enclosed Executive Order (the "order") declaring a national emergency with respect to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States posed by serious human rights abuse and corruption around the world. In addition to taking action under IEEPA, the order implements the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (Public Law 114-328) (the "Act") and delegates certain of its authorities.

The order blocks the property and interests in property of persons listed in the Annex to the order. It also blocks the property and interests in property of any foreign person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Attorney General:

(1) to be responsible for or complicit in, or to have directly or indirectly engaged in, serious human rights abuse;

(2) to be a current or former government official, or a person acting for or

on behalf of such an official, who is responsible for or complicit in, or has directly or indirectly engaged in:

(a) corruption, including the misappropriation of state assets, the expropriation of private assets for personal gain, corruption related to government contracts or the extraction of natural resources, or bribery; or

(b) the transfer or the facilitation of the transfer of the proceeds of corruption;

(3) to be or have been a leader or official of:

(a) an entity, including any government entity, that has engaged in, or whose members have engaged in, any of the activities described in (1), (2)(a), or (2)(b) above relating to the leader's or official's tenure; or

(b) an entity whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order as a result of activities related to the leader's or the official's tenure; or

(4) to have attempted to engage in any of the activities described in (1), (2)(a), or (2)(b) above.

The order also blocks any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Attorney General:

(5) to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of:

(a) any activity described in (1), (2)(a), or (2)(b) above that is conducted by a foreign person;

(b) any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order; or

(c) any entity described in (3)(a) above where the activity is conducted by a foreign person;

(6) to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to the order; or

(7) to have attempted to engage in any of the activities described in (5) or (6) above.

In addition, the order suspends entry into the United States of any alien listed in the Annex or determined to meet one or more of the criteria above.

I have delegated to the Secretary of the Treasury the authority, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to take such actions, including adopting rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA and the Act, as may be necessary to implement the order and relevant provisions of the Act. I have delegated to the Secretary of State the authority to take such actions, including adopting rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA and the Act, as may be necessary to implement the provisions of the order and the Act suspending entry into the United States of certain aliens. All executive departments and agencies are directed to

take all appropriate measures within their authority to implement the order.

DONALD J. TRUMP.
THE WHITE HOUSE, December 20, 2017.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:10 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 bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1159. An act to provide for continuing cooperation between the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Israel Space Agency, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4015. An act to improve the quality of proxy advisory firms for the protection of investors and the U.S. economy, and in the public interest, by fostering accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and competition in the proxy advisory firm industry.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 12:34 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 bills:

S. 1536. An act to designate a human trafficking prevention coordinator and to expand the scope of activities authorized under the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's outreach and education program to include human trafficking prevention activities, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1. An act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to titles II and V of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2018.

The enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

At 6 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 bills, without amendment:

S. 1393. An act to streamline the process by which active duty military, reservists, and veterans receive commercial driver's licenses.

S. 1532. An act to disqualify from operating a commercial motor vehicle for life an individual who uses a commercial motor vehicle in committing a felony involving human trafficking.

S. 1766. An act to reauthorize the SAFER Act of 2013, and for other purposes.

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

H.R. 4641. An act to authorize the President to award the Medal of Honor to John L. Canley for acts of valor during the Vietnam War while a member of the Marine Corps.

H.R. 4667. An act making further supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2018, for disaster assistance for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and calendar year 2017 wildfires, and for other purposes.

The message further announced the House agreed to the following concurrent resolution, without amendment:

S. Con. Res. 31. Concurrent resolution authorizing the use of the rotunda of the Capitol for a ceremony to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Bob Dole.

The message also announced that the House agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1370) to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to issue Department of Homeland Security-wide guidance and develop training programs as part of the Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign, and for other purposes, with an amendment, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate.

The message further announced that pursuant to section 5 of the Frederick Douglass Bicentennial Commission Act (Public Law 115-77), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House of Representatives to the Frederick Douglass Bicentennial Commission: Mr. HARRIS of Maryland; And from private life: Ms. Sylvia Quinton of Mardela Springs, Maryland and Dr. C. James Trotman of West Chester, Pennsylvania.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 8:41 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. UPTON) has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 1370. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to issue Department of Homeland Security-wide guidance and develop training programs as part of the Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign, and for other purposes.

The enrolled bill was subsequently signed by the Acting president pro tempore (Mr. KENNEDY).

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 1159. An act to provide for continuing cooperation between the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Israel Space Agency, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H.R. 4015. An act to improve the quality of proxy advisory firms for the protection of investors and the U.S. economy, and in the public interest, by fostering accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and competition in the proxy advisory firm industry; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bill was read the first time:

S. 2274. A bill to provide for the compensation of Federal employees affected by lapses in appropriations.

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-3725. A communication from the Alternate Federal Register Liaison Officer, Office

of the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Military Commissions" (RIN0790-AJ58) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2017; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3726. A communication from the President, Institute for Defense Analyses, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Report on Elements Contributing to Expenses Incurred by Contractors for Bid and Proposal; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3727. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), transmitting, pursuant to law, a semiannual report entitled, "Acceptance of Contributions for Defense Programs, Projects, and Activities; Defense Cooperation Account" and a semiannual listing of personal property contributed by coalition partners; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3728. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled, "Military Child Initiative Pilot Program Report of Activities, Fiscal Year 2017"; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3729. A communication from the Alternate Federal Register Liaison Officer, Office of the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amended Interpretive Rule Under the Military Lending Act Limitations on Terms of Consumer Credit Extended to Service Members and Dependents" (RIN0790-ZA13) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2017; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-3730. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency that was declared in Executive Order 13405 of June 16, 2006, with respect to Belarus; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-3731. A communication from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, "Report to Congress on Federal Government Energy Management for Fiscal Year 2015"; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3732. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Oklahoma Regulatory Program" ((30 CFR Part 936) (Docket ID OSM-2015-0006)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3733. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Wyoming Regulatory Program" ((30 CFR Part 950) (Docket ID OSM-2013-0002)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3734. A communication from the Secretary of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the status of construction and operations of the mixed oxide fuel fabrication facility (MOX facility) at the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site in South Carolina; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-3735. A communication from the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "National Water Quality Inven-

tory: Report to Congress"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3736. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Confidentiality Determinations for Hazardous Waste Export and Import Documents" (FRL No. 9971-49-OLEM) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3737. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Arizona: Authorization of State Hazardous Waste Management Program Revisions" (FRL No. 9972-09-Region 9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3738. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Approval of California Air Plan Revisions, Placer County and Ventura County Pollution Control Districts" (FRL No. 9971-76-Region 9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3739. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Approval of Arizona Air Plan Revision; San Manuel, Arizona; Second 10-Year Sulfur Dioxide Maintenance Plan" (FRL No. 9972-03-Region 9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3740. 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; Rhode Island; Infrastructure Requirement for the 2010 Sulfur Dioxide and 2010 Nitrogen Dioxide National Ambient Air Quality Standards" (FRL No. 9972-23-Region 1) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-3741. A communication from the Executive Analyst (Political), Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of General Counsel, Department of Health and Human Services, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3742. A communication from the Executive Analyst (Political), Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of General Counsel, Department of Health and Human Services, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3743. 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 "Guidance Under Section 409A for Pre-2009 Section 457A Deferrals" (Notice 2017-75) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3744. 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 Required

Amendments List" (Notice 2017-72) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3745. 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 "Donations of Technology and Related Support Services to Enforce Intellectual Property Rights" (RIN1515-AE21) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 12, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3746. A communication from the Federal Register Liaison Officer, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Implementation of Statutory Amendments Requiring the Modification of the Definition of Hard Cider; Delayed Compliance Date of the Hard Cider Tax Class Labeling Statement Requirement" (RIN1513-AC31) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-3747. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of defense articles that are controlled under Category I of the United States Munitions List to Ukraine in the amount of \$1,000,000 or more; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3748. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Australia Group; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3749. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (P.L. 107-243) and the Authorization for the Use of Force Against Iraq Resolution of 1991 (P.L. 102-1) for the August 9, 2017 - November 8, 2017 reporting period; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3750. A communication from the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Report of the Attorney General to the Congress of the United States on the Administration of the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as amended, for the six months ending June 30, 2017"; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-3751. A communication from the White House Liaison, Department of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a vacancy in the position of Director, Institute for Education Sciences, Department of Education, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-3752. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3753. A communication from the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, transmitting, pursuant to law, the

Semiannual Report of the Inspector General and the Chairman's Semiannual Report on Final Action Resulting from Audit Reports, Inspection Reports, and Evaluation Reports for the period from April 1, 2017 through September 30, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3754. 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-3755. A communication from the Chairman of the Board of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Inspector General's Semiannual Report to Congress for the period from April 1, 2017, through September 30, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3756. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting proposed legislation to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3757. A communication from the Acting Chairman, Federal Maritime Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's 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-3758. A communication from the Chairman, U.S. Election Assistance Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's 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-3759. A communication from the Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's Semiannual Report of the Inspector General and the Semiannual Management Report for the period from April 1, 2017 through September 30, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3760. A communication from the Board Members, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Board's Performance and Accountability Report for fiscal year 2017, including the Office of Inspector General's Auditor's Report; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3761. A communication from the Secretary of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department of Education Agency Financial Report for fiscal year 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-3762. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Helicopters (Type Certificate Previously Held by Eurocopter France)" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2015-4031)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3763. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Helicopters Deutschland GmbH Helicopters" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0933)) received in the

Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3764. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Airplanes" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0690)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3765. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Airplanes" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0478)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3766. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Airplanes" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0710)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3767. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Airplanes" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0497)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3768. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Airplanes" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0628)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3769. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Airplanes" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0480)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3770. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Airplanes" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2016-6429)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3771. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0526)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3772. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to

EC-3795. A communication from the Parallel Specialist, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Rockwell Collins, Inc. Traffic Surveillance System Processing Unit" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0659)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3796. A communication from the Paralegal Specialist, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; IPECO Pilot and Co-Pilot Seats" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0490)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3797. A communication from the Paralegal Specialist, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Embraer S.A. Airplanes" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0697)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3798. A communication from the Paralegal Specialist, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; 328 Support Services GmbH (Type Certificate Previously Held by AvCraft Aerospace GmbH; Fairchild Dornier GmbH; Dornier Luftfahrt GmbH) Airplanes" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2016-9568)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3799. A communication from the Paralegal Specialist, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; Rolls-Royce plc Turboprop Engines" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0816)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3800. A communication from the Paralegal Specialist, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Airworthiness Directives; General Electric Company Turboprop Engines" ((RIN2120-AA64) (Docket No. FAA-2017-1000)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3801. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Establishment of Class E Airspace; Boothville, LA" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0649)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3802. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Establishment of Class E Airspace; Rosebud, SD" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2016-9545)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3803. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Establishment of Class E Airspace; Cisco, TX" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0620)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3804. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Class E Airspace; Lemoore NAS, CA" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0219)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3805. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Class E Airspace; Bend, OR" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0391)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3806. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Class E Airspace; Alexander City, AL" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2016-9549)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3807. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Establishment of Class E Airspace; Hawthorne, NV" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0315)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3808. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Class E Airspace; Oskaloosa, IA" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0296)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3809. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Class E Airspace, for Stevens Point, WI" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0143)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3810. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Class E Airspace; Scottsboro, AL" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0557)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3811. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Establishment of Class E Airspace; Debois, ME" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2015-2891)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3812. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Class E Airspace; Prineville, OR" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0616)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3813. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Class E Airspace; Seward, NE" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0354)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3814. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Class D and Class E Airspace; Fort Knox, KY, and Louisville, KY" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2016-9499)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3815. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Class D and Class E Airspace; Pueblo, CO" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0666)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3816. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Multiple Restricted Areas; Vandenberg AFB, CA" ((RIN2120-AA66) (Docket No. FAA-2017-0985)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3817. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Take-off Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendment; Amdt. No. 3771" ((RIN2120-AA65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3818. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Take-off Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (45); Amdt. No. 3772" ((RIN2120-AA65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3819. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Take-off Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (84); Amdt. No. 3773" ((RIN2120-AA65) received in

the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3820. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Take-off Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (11); Amdt. No. 3774" (RIN2120-AA65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3821. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Take-off Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (171); Amdt. No. 3767" (RIN2120-AA65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3822. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Take-off Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (3); Amdt. No. 3768" (RIN2120-AA65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3823. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Take-off Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (110); Amdt. No. 3770" (RIN2120-AA65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3824. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Take-off Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (52); Amdt. No. 3769" (RIN2120-AA65) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3825. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Part 95 Instrument Flight Rules; Miscellaneous Amendments; Amendment No. 536" (RIN2120-AA63) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3826. A communication from the Federal Register Liaison Officer, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Establishment of the Outer Coastal Plain Viticultural Area" (RIN1513-AC32) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3827. A communication from the Federal Register Liaison Officer, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, Department

of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Establishment of the Petaluma Viticultural Area and Modification of the North Coast Viticultural Area" (RIN1513-AC19) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3828. A communication from the Regulations Officer, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordination and Planning Area Reform" (RIN2125-AF75) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3829. A communication from the Acting Chairman of the Office of Proceedings, Surface Transportation Board, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Expediting Rate Cases" (RIN2140-AB33) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 15, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3830. A communication from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Authorizing Permissive Use of the 'Next Generation' Broadcast Television Standard" (FCC 17-158) (GN Docket No. 16-142) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-3831. A communication from the Impact Analyst, Office of Regulation Policy and Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Extra-Schedular Evaluations for Individual Disabilities" (RIN2900-AP48) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 13, 2017; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

The following petitions and memorials were laid before the Senate and were referred or ordered to lie on the table as indicated:

POM-145. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Texas urging the United States Congress to direct the Department of Defense to relocate the United States Africa Command to Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base in Houston; to the Committee on Armed Services.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 41

Whereas, The Pentagon could realize significant savings by relocating the United States Africa Command from Germany to Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base in Houston; and

Whereas, When AFRICOM was created in 2007, the Department of Defense chose a temporary location in Stuttgart; it intended to select a permanent headquarters in Africa, but set this plan aside due to cost projections, security, and the sensitivities of African nations; and

Whereas, The Department of Defense conducted a study in 2012 that found maintaining AFRICOM headquarters stateside would cost \$60 million to \$70 million less per year, and now those savings would be even greater due to significant increases in Overseas Cost of Living Allowances rates; although relocation would involve expense, this expense could be recouped within two to six years; moreover, the relocation would repatriate about 1,400 direct jobs and create as many as

4,300 additional jobs for United States residents, and it would have an annual impact on the local economy ranging from \$400 million to \$500 million; and

Whereas, Should the defense department decide to relocate AFRICOM, Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base in Houston would be an ideal home for the headquarters; the base features strong joint service military value of active duty, reserve, and guard units from all five United States armed services, some of which presently conduct training and operational missions for AFRICOM; it is also equipped to handle large military aircraft, and the city boasts one of the nation's most vibrant ports, which handles 40 percent of all United States trade with Africa; moreover, the community is exceptionally supportive of the military, and the Greater Houston area has strong cultural, educational, medical, and diplomatic ties with Africa; and

Whereas, The Government Accountability Office has concluded that the relocation of AFRICOM to the United States would generate tremendous cost savings and economic benefits, and Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base offers advantages that would enhance the effectiveness of the headquarters; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the 85th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the United States Congress to direct the Department of Defense to relocate the United States Africa Command to Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base in Houston; and, be it further

Resolved, That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the secretary of the Department of Defense, to the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution be entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.

POM-146. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Texas urging the United States Congress to review federal regulation on the oil and gas industry in Texas; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 26

Whereas, the Texas Legislature recognizes that this period in our nation's history represents an opportunity for Texas to work with the leadership of the federal government to transcend partisan politics and correct misuses of federal regulatory power that have threatened the Texas oil and gas industry, the jobs it creates, and the economy of the state; and

Whereas, Texas oil and gas fields have provided a pathway toward American energy independence from foreign powers, have afforded financial security to hundreds of thousands of individuals in Texas, and have delivered safe and reliable energy to fuel our nation's economy; and

Whereas, during the past eight years, the federal government has promulgated regulations that jeopardize the productivity of the oil and gas fields of Texas; and

Whereas, new federal regulations have been proposed and implemented despite the protests of Texas and many other oil and gas producing states, resulting in overregulation that prioritizes minor environmental gains over major productive losses; and

Whereas, the State of Texas has joined many other oil and gas producing states to file more than 20 lawsuits against federal overreach; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the 85th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the

executive branch and the Congress of the United States to work in conjunction with the State of Texas to identify federal regulations promulgated during the last eight years, especially those promulgated under the authority of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Department of the Interior, and the United States Department of Energy, and determine whether they should be revised, delegated to state agencies, or eliminated in order to ease the overly burdensome regulatory patchwork on the oil and gas industry in Texas; and, be it further

Resolved, That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution be entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.

POM—147. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Texas urging the United States Congress to increase appropriations from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to ensure that the nation's ship channels are maintained and safe, to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 37

Whereas, Seaport activities generate more than \$4 trillion in economic activity each year, representing more than a quarter of United States gross domestic product and yielding more than \$41 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue; and

Whereas, To support this critical component of international trade, the United States Congress established the Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) on shippers in 1986 as a means of funding the maintenance and improvement of vital harbor infrastructure; and

Whereas, HMT revenues deposited into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund now total about \$1.6 billion annually, but in recent years, Congress has appropriated less than half of those funds for the intended purpose, leading to a decline in dredging and maintenance by the United States Army Corps of Engineers; the consequence is an accumulation of sediment that leaves navigation channels narrower and shallower, and when silted channels constrain vessels from carrying full loads or force them to wait for high tide, the costs of imports and exports rise, as does the risk of vessel grounding and associated oil spills; the Corps of Engineers has estimated that the full depth and width of our coastal ports is available less than 35 percent of the time, costing the economy billions of dollars annually; and

Whereas, Each year, the HMT provides an amount sufficient to meet all of the nation's authorized harbor maintenance needs, but as a result of lagging appropriations, the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund had a balance of more than \$9 billion at the start of 2016; in Texas alone, less than 25 percent of the HMT revenue collected in the state has been appropriated for harbor maintenance; and

Whereas, Our nation's ports are vital to our economic prosperity and global competitiveness, and these funds, which were collected for the express purpose of the maintenance and improvement of the ports, should be put to work; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the 85th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the United States Congress to increase appropriations from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to ensure that the nation's ship channels are appropriately maintained and safe; and, be it further

Resolved, That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to

the president of the United States, to the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution be entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.

POM—148. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Texas urging the United States Congress to direct the Bureau of Land Management to affirm the provisions of the Red River Boundary Compact and to acknowledge that the vegetation line on the south bank of the Red River forms the boundary between Oklahoma and Texas; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 30

Whereas, The Red River Boundary Compact of 2000 set the boundary between Texas and Oklahoma at the vegetation line on the south bank of the Red River, with the exception of the Texoma area, where the boundary is established pursuant to procedures outlined in the agreement; and

Whereas, In 2013, the United States Bureau of Land Management began developing a resource management plan for the use of land along a 116-mile stretch of the Red River; it claims that as many as 90,000 acres in Texas may actually be part of federal lands and would therefore be public land under a 1923 Supreme Court ruling; and

Whereas, Many Texas residents have held title to this land for generations, and they have been paying property taxes on the land while cultivating and maintaining it; the boundary between the states was settled in 2000 for legal jurisdiction, when the U.S. Congress ratified the compact, but now, confusion over the boundary threatens the value of this privately owned land and makes it difficult for property owners to make informed decisions concerning its disposition and their livelihoods; and

Whereas, Private property rights are the bedrock of a free society, and the actions of the Bureau of Land Management with regard to land covered by the Red River Boundary Compact are an egregious example of federal overreach; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the 85th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the United States Congress to direct the Bureau of Land Management to affirm the provisions of the Red River Boundary Compact and to acknowledge that the vegetation line on the south bank of the Red River forms the boundary between Oklahoma and Texas; and, be it further.

Resolved, That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, to the director of the United States Bureau of Land Management, to the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution be entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.

POM—149. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Texas urging the United States Congress to enact legislation to ensure that all veterans receive, in a timely manner, the level of medical care that they have earned and that they so richly deserve, to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 52

Whereas, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is charged with ensuring the health and well-being of the nation's veterans, but in recent years, its failure to adequately perform its mission has been the source of scandal; and

Whereas, in 2014, the United States Congress responded to unconscionable delays and denials of care at VA facilities by passing the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act, which allows access to private medical care providers for veterans who have been waiting more than 30 days for an appointment or who live more than 40 miles from a VA facility; this law is set to expire in 2017; and

Whereas, by expanding the reforms of the Veterans Choice Act, Congress can improve the VA system, broadening access to timely health care while offering greater choice and flexibility to every eligible veteran; experts have proposed allowing access to walk-in clinics without preauthorization or copayment, expanding VA pharmacy hours and telemedicine, and extending the Veterans Choice Card program to permit all qualified veterans to see the doctor of their choice; in addition, those who have studied the system carefully encourage best-practices peer review for VA facilities; and

Whereas, our nation's veterans have made enormous sacrifices to guarantee our freedoms, and although the nation can never fully repay its debt of gratitude, it can and should ensure timely access to the highest quality of medical care; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the 85th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the United States Congress to enact legislation to ensure that all veterans receive in a timely manner the level of medical care that they have earned and that they so richly deserve; and, be it further

Resolved, That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution be entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.

POM—150. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Texas urging the United States Congress to pass a budget; to the Committee on the Budget.

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 59

Whereas, For too long, Congress has proven itself fiscally irresponsible and has created a crushing national debt through improvident and imprudent spending; and

Whereas, The deleterious effect of this fiscal mismanagement on our economy and the strength of our nation is ongoing and the consequences of inaction are severe; and

Whereas, Setting a federal budget is an essential aspect of governing, and Congress must accept its responsibility to regularly pass a budget bill; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the 85th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the Congress of the United States to pass a budget; and, be it further

Resolved, That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution be officially entered into the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.

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. SCHATZ:

S. 2260. A bill to establish and fund an Opioids and STOP Initiative to expand, intensify, and coordinate fundamental, translational, and clinical research of the National Institutes of Health with respect to opioid abuse, the understanding of pain, and the discovery and development of safer and more effective treatments and preventive interventions for pain; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. LANKFORD (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. GRAHAM, Ms. HARRIS, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. HEINRICH):

S. 2261. A bill to protect the administration of Federal elections against cybersecurity threats; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mrs. MCCASKILL (for herself, Mr. RUBIO, and Ms. HASSAN):

S. 2262. A bill to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to establish in the Department of Homeland Security a board to coordinate and integrate departmental intelligence and activities and policy related to counterterrorism, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. DONNELLY (for himself and Mr. YOUNG):

S. 2263. A bill to amend the Agricultural Act of 2014 to require base acres planted to fruits, vegetables, and wild rice to be considered planted to a covered commodity for purposes of any recalculation of base acres; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. REED (for himself and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 2264. A bill to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to add Rhode Island to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mrs. CAPITO, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 2265. A bill to promote democracy and the rule of law in Nicaragua, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. CORNYN):

S. 2266. A bill to authorize the Office on Violence Against Women to improve the handling of crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking by incorporating a trauma-informed approach into the initial response to and investigation of such crimes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. FRANKEN:

S. 2267. A bill to amend title 11, United States Code, to prioritize certain pension claims in bankruptcy, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. KAINE, Mr. BROWN, and Ms. HARRIS):

S. 2268. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to modify certain provisions relating to the capital financing of historically Black colleges and universities; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. CASEY (for himself and Mr. ISAKSON):

S. 2269. A bill to reauthorize the Global Food Security Act of 2016 for 5 additional years; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. DAINES (for himself, Ms. HARRIS, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Ms. BALDWIN):

S. 2270. A bill to make improvements to the account for the State response to the opioid abuse crisis to improve tribal health; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. COCHRAN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 2271. A bill to reauthorize the Museum and Library Services Act; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. HARRIS (for herself, Ms. WARREN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 2272. A bill to amend the Revised Statutes to grant State attorneys general the ability to issue subpoenas to investigate suspected violations of State laws that are applicable to national banks; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 2273. A bill to extend the period during which vessels that are shorter than 79 feet in length and fishing vessels are not required to have a permit for discharges incidental to the normal operation of the vessel; considered and passed.

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. CARPER, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. SCHATZ, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HASSAN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. WARNER, Mr. LEAHY, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. UDALL, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. KAINE, Ms. WARREN, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 2274. A bill to provide for the compensation of Federal employees affected by lapses in appropriations; read the first time.

By Mr. CASSIDY:

S.J. Res. 51. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to limiting the number of terms that a Member of Congress may serve; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mrs. MCCASKILL (for herself and Mr. BLUNT):

S. Res. 364. A resolution congratulating the University of Central Missouri women's soccer team for winning the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division II Women's Soccer Championship at Swope Soccer Village in Kansas City, Missouri; considered and agreed to.

By Mrs. FISCHER (for herself and Mr. SASSE):

S. Res. 365. A resolution congratulating the University of Nebraska-Lincoln volleyball team for winning the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Volleyball Championship; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. HARRIS (for herself, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BROWN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. SCHUMER, and Mr. BURR):

S. Res. 366. A resolution honoring the accomplishments of the 9 historically Black colleges and universities that celebrated their sesquicentennial anniversaries during the week of September 24 through September 30, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 266

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Colorado

(Mr. GARDNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 266, a bill to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Anwar Sadat in recognition of his heroic achievements and courageous contributions to peace in the Middle East.

S. 793

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 793, a bill to prohibit sale of shark fins, and for other purposes.

S. 872

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 872, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to make permanent the extension of the Medicare-dependent hospital (MDH) program and the increased payments under the Medicare low-volume hospital program.

S. 946

At the request of Mr. FLAKE, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 946, a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire additional Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists to provide treatment court services to justice-involved veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 980

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 980, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for payments for certain rural health clinic and Federally qualified health center services furnished to hospice patients under the Medicare program.

S. 1697

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1697, a bill to condition assistance to the West Bank and Gaza on steps by the Palestinian Authority to end violence and terrorism against Israeli citizens and United States Citizens.

S. 1706

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1706, a bill to prevent human health threats posed by the consumption of equines raised in the United States.

S. 1719

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1719, a bill to eliminate duties on imports of recreational performance outerwear, to establish the Sustainable Textile and Apparel Research Fund, and for other purposes.

S. 1873

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1873, a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out

a program to establish peer specialists in patient aligned care teams at medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 2051

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2051, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to modernize the physician self-referral prohibitions to promote care coordination in the merit-based incentive payment system and to facilitate physician practice participation in alternative payment models under the Medicare program, and for other purposes.

S. 2065

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2065, a bill to establish a demonstration program to provide integrated care for Medicare beneficiaries with end-stage renal disease, and for other purposes.

S. 2088

At the request of Mrs. FISCHER, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2088, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the issuance of the Gold Star Installation Access Card to the surviving spouse, dependent children, and other next of kin of a member of the Armed Forces who dies while serving on certain active or reserve duty, to ensure that a remarried surviving spouse with dependent children of the deceased member remains eligible for installation benefits to which the surviving spouse was previously eligible, and for other purposes.

S. 2105

At the request of Mr. BOOZMAN, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2105, a bill to modify the presumption of service connection for veterans who were exposed to herbicide agents while serving in the Armed Forces in Thailand during the Vietnam era, and for other purposes.

S. 2135

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2135, a bill to enforce current law regarding the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

S. 2159

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2159, a bill to require covered harassment and covered discrimination awareness and prevention training for Members, officers, employees, interns, fellows, and detailees of Congress within 30 days of employment and annually thereafter, to require a biennial climate survey of Congress, to

amend the enforcement process under the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights for covered harassment and covered discrimination complaints, and for other purposes.

S. 2203

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the names of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) were added as cosponsors of S. 2203, a bill to amend title 9 of the United States Code with respect to arbitration.

S. 2236

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the names of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2236, a bill to require covered discrimination and covered harassment awareness and prevention training for Members, officers, employees, interns, fellows, and detailees of Congress within 30 days of employment and annually thereafter, to require a biennial climate survey of Congress, to amend the enforcement process under the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights for covered discrimination and covered harassment complaints, and for other purposes.

S. 2250

At the request of Ms. DUCKWORTH, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2250, a bill to ensure due process protections of individuals in the United States against unlawful detention based solely on a protected characteristic.

S. 2259

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2259, a bill to establish certain duties for pharmacies to ensure provision of Food and Drug Administration-approved contraception, medication related to contraception, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 139

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 139, a resolution condemning the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

S. RES. 363

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 363, a resolution expressing profound concern about the growing political, humanitarian, and economic crisis in Venezuela and the widespread human rights abuses perpetrated by the Government of Venezuela.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. REED (for himself and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 2264. A bill to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to add Rhode Island to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I am introducing the Rhode Island Fishermen's Fairness Act along with my colleague, Senator WHITEHOUSE. I am also pleased that my colleagues, Representatives JAMES LANGEVIN and DAVID CICILLINE, will be introducing a companion measure in the House of Representatives.

Our legislation will give Rhode Island voice and voting representation on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), which manages some of the most important fish stocks for our State's commercial fishing industry—chief among them squid. Indeed, the National Marine Fisheries Service reported that Rhode Island led Atlantic States in the harvest of squid in 2016, bringing in 22.5 million pounds and helping make Point Judith, Rhode Island one of the most productive and valuable commercial fishing ports in the United States. For years now, Rhode Island's landings of stocks managed by the MAFMC have outpaced the landings of those managed by the New England Fishery Management Council, where Rhode Island is represented. Moreover, Rhode Island has a larger stake in the Mid-Atlantic fishery than many of the States that currently hold seats on the MAFMC.

Because so much is at stake for our State in every decision the MAFMC makes, our bill would expand the MAFMC by two seats in Order to ensure that Rhode Island will have the minimum number of seats guaranteed to other States on the council. It will allow Rhode Island to continue to have representation on the New England Fishery Management Council, where it still has significant interests. This proposal is not unprecedented. In fact, it is modeled on a provision of the 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Act that added North Carolina to the MAFMC in 1996 while allowing it to retain its membership on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Mr. President, this is a commonsense proposal and one that my colleagues and I will be working to advance either on its own or as part of the reauthorization the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

By Mr. DAINES (for himself, Ms. HARRIS, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Ms. BALDWIN):

S. 2270. A bill to make improvements to the account for the State response to the opioid abuse crisis to improve tribal health; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. DAINES. 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. 2270

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 “Mitigating the Methamphetamine Epidemic and Promoting Tribal Health Act” or the “Mitigating METH Act”.

SEC. 2. ACCOUNT FOR THE STATE RESPONSE TO THE OPIOID ABUSE CRISIS.

Section 1003 of the 21st Century Cures Act (42 U.S.C. 290ee-3 note) is amended—

- (1) in subsection (b)—
 - (A) in paragraph (1), by inserting “and Tribal” after “State”;
 - (B) in paragraph (2)(A)(ii), by striking “\$500,000,000” and inserting “\$525,000,000”; and
 - (C) in paragraph (3)(B), by inserting “and Tribal” after “State”;
- (2) in subsection (c)—
 - (A) in paragraph (1)—
 - (i) in the paragraph heading, by striking “STATE RESPONSE TO THE OPIOID” and inserting “STATE AND TRIBAL RESPONSE TO THE OPIOID”;
 - (ii) in the first sentence, by inserting “and Indian tribes and Tribal organizations (as the terms ‘Indian tribes’ and ‘tribal organizations’ are defined in the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act)” after “grants to States”; and
 - (iii) in the second sentence, by inserting “and Tribes” after “States” each place that such term appears;
 - (B) in paragraph (2)—
 - (i) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A)—
 - (I) by inserting “, Tribe, or Tribal organization” after “to a State”;
 - (II) by inserting “or Tribal” after “by the State”; and
 - (III) by inserting “or by a Tribe or Tribal organization” after “et seq.”;
 - (ii) in subparagraph (A), by inserting “and Tribal” after “State”;
 - (iii) in subparagraph (E), by inserting “or Tribe” after “as the State”; and
 - (C) by adding at the end the following:

“(3) OTHER SUBSTANCES.—A State or Indian tribe may use grants awarded under this section for prevention and treatment of the use of other substances such as methamphetamine, if the use of such other substances is determined by the State or tribe to have a substantial public health impact on the State or tribe.”; and
 - (3) in subsection (d), by inserting “, Tribe, or tribal organization” after “A State”.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. COCHRAN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 2271. A bill to reauthorize the Museum and Library Services Act; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I am pleased to be joined by Senators COLLINS, COCHRAN, GILLIBRAND, and MURKOWSKI in introducing legislation to renew the law that expands the reach of libraries and museums and enables them to better serve their communities. These vital institutions educate, inform, engage, and connect people from all walks of life.

In 1996, Congress passed the Museum and Library Services Act, establishing

the Institute of Museum and Library Services, IMLS, to house our Nation’s library and museum programs together for the first time. My predecessor, the late Senator Claiborne Pell, a great champion for expanding educational and cultural opportunities to all communities, was instrumental in passage of this law. The Senate Committee report for this bill noted the “great potential in an Institute that is focused on the combined roles that libraries and museums play in our community life, in support of research, learning, and entertainment, and in support of American culture and history.”

Over the last 21 years we have seen IMLS, with a relatively modest Federal investment, build the capacity to support and expand access to library and museum services at the State and local levels. IMLS has been the source of major Federal support for nearly 120,000 libraries, including public, academic, research, special, and tribal libraries, and 35,000 museums, including art, history, science and technology, children’s, historical societies, tribal, planetariums, botanic gardens, and zoos. We have seen access to libraries and museums increase, and these institutions continue to evolve as community hubs, advancing the growth and vitality of the areas they serve.

In Rhode Island, IMLS funding for the grants to States program under the Library Services and Technology Act, LSTA, has supported improved online resources; literacy initiatives, including a summer reading program; and the provision of talking books to residents with visual impairments and disabilities. Providence Public Library was awarded a recent grant to provide underserved teens with learning opportunities, leading to digital credentials, academic credit, exposure to work, and entry into education and career pathways. IMLS has also supported and elevated the work of Rhode Island museums. For instance, the Tomaquag Museum in Exeter was one of ten recipients nationally to be recognized with a 2016 National Medal for Museum and Library Service. The Providence Children’s Museum and the Preservation Society of Newport County also received grants to support their work in recent years.

I have been proud to continue the work of Senator Pell in supporting robust funding for libraries and museums and authoring the last two renewals of the Museum and Library Services Act. I have seen firsthand the impact libraries and museums have had on our communities in Rhode Island and the residents and visitors they serve, making our State stronger because of the services and experiences that these institutions provide.

The museum and library communities have provided invaluable input in helping us craft this bipartisan legislation. I would especially like to thank the Rhode Island library community for hosting me at libraries across the state and convening a

roundtable discussion last year to delve deeper into the programs libraries are providing and ways to improve how they serve their communities.

In response to the input and insight offered by the library and museum communities, the bill we are introducing today, the Museum and Library Services Act of 2017, strengthens the use of data-driven tools to measure the impact and maximize the effectiveness of library and museum services and better tailor local services to address and meet community needs. The legislation provides for technical support and assistance to improve data collection. It also enhances IMLS’s collaborative efforts with an expanded number of Federal agencies in order to fully leverage the benefits libraries and museums provide to Americans.

This legislation also amends LSTA to highlight the role of libraries as community hubs, equipped to provide services and programming in such areas as literacy, education, lifelong learning, workforce development, economic and business development, digital literacy skills, critical thinking, financial literacy skills, and new and emerging technology. The bill provides greater emphasis on recruiting and training the next generation of library and information science professionals from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. Additionally, it focuses leadership grant funds on activities that serve a range of library types and geographically diverse areas; have evaluation, analysis, and dissemination components; and involve, impact, or have future applicability in libraries. And, in the aftermath of this past year’s devastating hurricanes and wildfires, the bill clarifies that grant funds can be used to help libraries get resources back online as communities face the challenge of recovering from a disaster.

The Museum and Library Services Act of 2017 also builds on the over 40-year legacy of Federal support for improving and expanding access to museum services. It addresses the critical need for professional development and recruiting and preparing the next generation of museum professionals, emphasizing diversity so that museums better reflect the communities they serve. The legislation also highlights the educational role of museums and the diverse ways that museums engage their communities, and it encourages partnerships with other agencies, professional networks, and community-based organizations to expand and enhance access to museum services.

The Museum and Library Services Act of 2017 will continue our tradition of supporting our communities through their museums and libraries, while looking ahead and providing flexibility for these vital institutions to respond to changing demands and missions. Our bill has the support of the American Library Association and the American Alliance of Museums and many of their affiliated associations. I thank my colleagues for supporting this endeavor

and look forward to more joining us as we work together to urge swift action to adopt this important legislation.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleague from Rhode Island, Senator REED, in introducing the Museum and Library Services Act of 2017. This bill would reauthorize the core programs administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which support libraries and museums in Maine and across the country. This bill includes important updates to improve the abilities of libraries and museums to meet the needs of local communities.

The Museum and Library Services Act represents a commitment to supporting libraries and museums that enrich our communities. Libraries provide not only a wonderful learning tool, full of books, public documents, and internet access, but also are community hubs where citizens can meet to share and explore ideas. Likewise, great museums do more than accumulate artifacts—they tell stories. The programs reauthorized in this bill would help libraries and museums across Maine and the United States better serve the public by helping with research, planning, and programming.

The Museum and Library Services Act would make important improvements to IMLS's ability to collaborate with states and communities. It would reauthorize the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), the only federal program that helps public libraries meet their community's needs, enhance their services through technology, reach underserved and rural populations, and recruit new professionals to the library field. Ensuring that federal resources reach our rural communities is particularly important to me, and I am pleased that this bill highlights support for rural and tribal areas.

Every state in our country receives its share of the LSTA, which leverages the federal investment with a state and local funding match. In Maine, the LSTA has helped libraries lend books and other materials by mail to reach residents in communities that do not have libraries nearby or who are homebound. It has helped Maine libraries serve individuals with disabilities through access to book recordings and special media players, including braille and audio downloads. It has helped my state improve online access to magazines, newspapers, and reference books, and spurred innovative collaborations with schools statewide.

The bill would also reauthorize the Museum Services Act, providing support for museums to collaborate with schools, libraries, and colleges and universities, and to encourage new technologies to extend the reach of programs and museum collections. As with the LSTA, museums are incentivized to leverage other sources of support to match the federal investment.

This reauthorization underscores the role that libraries and museums play in

community revitalization. Libraries are important information centers for workforce development, health information, and digital and financial literacy. Museums are also vital community partners that work to connect our communities to the cultural, historical, natural, and scientific pieces of our heritage.

From providing job search resources and free internet access to exposing children and families to enriching literary and educational experiences, libraries and museums serve vital roles in our communities. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

By Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 2273. A bill to extend the period during which vessels that are shorter than 79 feet in length and fishing vessels are not required to have a permit for discharges incidental to the normal operation of the vessel; considered and passed.

S. 2273

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF MORATORIUM.

Section 2(a) of Public Law 110-299 (33 U.S.C. 1342 note) is amended by striking "December 18, 2017" and inserting "January 19, 2018".

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 364—CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL MISSOURI WOMEN'S SOCCER TEAM FOR WINNING THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION DIVISION II WOMEN'S SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP AT SWOPE SOCCER VILLAGE IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Mrs. MCCASKILL (for herself and Mr. BLUNT) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 364

Whereas, on December 2, 2017, the University of Central Missouri won the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division II Women's Soccer Championship at Swope Soccer Village in Kansas City, Missouri, which was the first national championship in the history of the University of Central Missouri women's soccer program;

Whereas the University of Central Missouri women's soccer team completed an undefeated season with a record of 26 wins and no losses or ties, setting a new Division II record for wins in a season;

Whereas the University of Central Missouri women's soccer team tied a Division II single-season record with 21 shutouts;

Whereas the University of Central Missouri women's soccer team finished the season as the top-ranked team in the United Soccer Coaches Top 25 Division II postseason poll;

Whereas 5 of the University of Central Missouri Jennies, Ana Dilkes, Jada Scott, Kayla Hamner, Baylie Edwards, and Abby Rhodes, were named to the Division II Conference Commissioners Association All-America Soccer Teams; and

Whereas the University of Central Missouri is a leader in promoting soccer and the values of teamwork, commitment, and excellence: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the University of Central Missouri women's soccer team for winning a national title for the first time in the history of the University of Central Missouri women's soccer program while maintaining an undefeated season; and

(2) encourages the University of Central Missouri to continue promoting the values of teamwork, commitment, and excellence through the soccer and other athletic programs of the University of Central Missouri.

SENATE RESOLUTION 365—CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN VOLLEYBALL TEAM FOR WINNING THE 2017 NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION DIVISION I VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mrs. FISCHER (for herself and Mr. SASSE) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 365

Whereas, on December 16, 2017, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Cornhuskers won the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association (referred to in this preamble as the "NCAA") Division I Volleyball Championship in Kansas City, Missouri in an overwhelming victory over the University of Florida by a score of 25 to 22, 25 to 17, 18 to 25, and 25 to 16;

Whereas the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has won 5 NCAA volleyball championships;

Whereas the Cornhuskers ended their championship season with a 19-match winning streak and finished the year with a record of 32 wins and 4 losses;

Whereas each member of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln volleyball team, including Annika Albrecht, Hunter Atherton, Hayley Densberger, Mikaela Foecke, Allie Havers, Briana Holman, Kelly Hunter, Kenzie Maloney, Chesney McClellan, Sami Slaughter, Lauren Stivrins, Jazz Sweet, Anezka Szabo, and Sydney Townsend, contributed to that outstanding victory;

Whereas head coach John Cook, assistant coach Tyler Hildebrand, assistant coach Kayla Banwarth, volunteer assistant coach Ryan Coomes, director of operations Lindsay Peterson, video coordinator Kelly O'Connor, and graduate managers Joe Klein, John Henry, and Bre Mackie, guided that outstanding group of women to a national championship;

Whereas Mikaela Foecke and Kelly Hunter were named the co-Most Outstanding Players of the 2017 NCAA Championship;

Whereas Kelly Hunter was named the Big Ten Setter of the Year, becoming the first Nebraska player ever to earn that award;

Whereas Annika Albrecht, Mikaela Foecke, and Kelly Hunter were recognized as All-Americans by the American Volleyball Coaches Association, and Briana Holman received an honorable mention; and

Whereas an NCAA Tournament record-breaking crowd of 18,516 volleyball fans attended the championship game, reflecting the tremendous spirit and dedication of Nebraska fans supporting the Cornhuskers as the team won the national championship: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the University of Nebraska-Lincoln volleyball team as the winner of the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Volleyball Championship;

(2) commends the University of Nebraska players, coaches, and staff for their hard work and dedication;

(3) recognizes the students, alumni, and loyal fans that supported the Cornhuskers on their journey to win another Division I Championship; and

(4) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate prepare an official copy of this resolution for presentation to—

(A) the president of the University of Nebraska;

(B) the athletic director of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; and

(C) the head coach of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln volleyball team.

SENATE RESOLUTION 366—HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 9 HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES THAT CELEBRATED THEIR SESQUICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARIES DURING THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 24 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2017

Ms. HARRIS (for herself, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BROWN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. SCHUMER, and Mr. BURR) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. RES. 366

Whereas, in 1867, 9 historically Black colleges and universities were established in 4 Southern States, Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, and North Carolina, as well as in the District of Columbia, which constituted the largest number of historically Black Colleges and Universities founded in any single year before or after that date;

Whereas the 9 historically Black colleges and universities that celebrated their sesquicentennial anniversaries during the week of September 24 through September 30, 2017, trace their foundations to rather modest beginnings but, in the course of a century and a half, have established records of significant achievement and legacies of devotion to academic excellence;

Whereas the 9 institutions celebrating their sesquicentennial anniversaries include—

(1) Alabama State University in Marion, Alabama;

(2) Barber-Scotia College in Concord, North Carolina;

(3) Fayetteville State University in Fayetteville, North Carolina;

(4) Howard University in Washington, District of Columbia;

(5) Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina;

(6) Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia;

(7) Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland;

(8) St. Augustine's University in Raleigh, North Carolina; and

(9) Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama;

Whereas Alabama State University was incorporated on July 17, 1867, as Lincoln Normal School in Marion, Alabama, by 9 freed slaves to educate Black children;

Whereas Lincoln Normal School—

(1) was founded with \$500, which was used to purchase the land and lay the foundation;

(2) in 1928, was converted from a junior college to a 4-year college; and

(3) in 1969, was formally granted a name change by the Alabama State Board of Education and became Alabama State University;

Whereas notable figures of the civil rights era attended and graduated from Alabama State University, including the Reverend Ralph David Abernathy, attorney Fred Gray, and the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth;

Whereas Barber-Scotia College—

(1) in 1867, was founded as Scotia Seminary in Concord, North Carolina, by the Reverend Luke Dorland; and

(2) in 1870, was chartered to educate newly freed female slaves;

Whereas Scotia Seminary—

(1) was the first historically Black institution of higher education for females established in the United States;

(2) in 1916, was renamed as Scotia Women's College; and

(3) in 1930, merged with Barber Memorial College to become Barber-Scotia Junior College for women;

Whereas Barber-Scotia College became a 4-year college for women in 1946 and a coeducational institution in 1954;

Whereas one of the distinguished graduates of Barber-Scotia College was Mary McCleod Bethune, the founder of Bethune-Cookman College;

Whereas Fayetteville State University was formed as the Howard School on November 29, 1867, by 7 African-American men who paid \$136 for 2 lots on Gillespie Street in Fayetteville, North Carolina;

Whereas the Howard School was formally renamed Fayetteville State University in 1969;

Whereas Fayetteville State University holds the distinction of being the second oldest public school in North Carolina;

Whereas Howard University—

(1) was chartered by Congress on March 2, 1867, in Washington, District of Columbia;

(2) stands today as the most comprehensive historically Black college and university in the United States, in terms of undergraduate and graduate programs of study;

(3) has produced numerous Rhodes scholars, Truman scholars, Fulbright scholars, and Picking fellows and a Marshall scholar during the history of the university; and

(4) has graduated some of the most accomplished African-Americans in history, including Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States Thurgood Marshall, author Toni Morrison, and former United States Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young;

Whereas 5 current Members of Congress are graduates of Howard University;

Whereas Johnson C. Smith University was established on April 7, 1867, as the Biddle Memorial Institute by Reverend S.C. Alexander and Reverend W.L. Miller in Charlotte, North Carolina;

Whereas the first football game with African-American players was played at Biddle University in 1892, a game that today is called the "Commemorative Classic";

Whereas Johnson C. Smith University—

(1) is the first historically Black college and university in the South to offer professional courses in education; and

(2) has produced numerous politicians, including Eva Clayton, the first African-American to represent North Carolina in the House of Representatives since the 19th century;

Whereas Morehouse College—

(1) in 1867, was founded by the Reverend William Jefferson White in Augusta, Georgia;

(2) in 1879, was moved from Augusta, Georgia, to its current location in Atlanta, Georgia;

(3) is the largest college for men in the United States, enrolling more than 2,000 students;

(4) is 1 of only 2 historically Black colleges and universities to produce a Rhodes scholar; and

(5) has graduated a number of African-American luminaries, including the Mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, Maynard Jackson, film director Spike Lee, and the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.;

Whereas 2 current Members of Congress are graduates of Morehouse College;

Whereas Morgan State University was founded in Baltimore, Maryland, as the Centenary Biblical Institute in 1867 to train former slaves and freedmen for the Methodist ministry;

Whereas, the Centenary Biblical Institute—

(1) in 1874, became coeducational;

(2) in 1890, changed its name to Morgan College in honor of one of its board members; and

(3) in 1939, was purchased by the State of Maryland to provide more academic opportunities for black students and was renamed Morgan State College;

Whereas Morgan State College—

(1) distinguished itself as a liberal arts college;

(2) in 1975, was granted university status; and

(3) has been designated as the preeminent public research university in Maryland, as well as a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation;

Whereas, in 2004, the Morgan State Choir was named "The Nation's Best College Choir" by Reader's Digest and has performed for audiences on 4 continents;

Whereas Morgan State University—

(1) has graduated a great number of prominent African-American leaders in politics, law, entertainment, and science; and

(2) has a list of alumni that includes Congressmen Parren J. Mitchell and Kweisi Mfume, Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals of Maryland Robert M. Bell, novelist Zora Neale Hurston, and Pulitzer-Prize winner James Alan McPherson;

Whereas St. Augustine's University was founded in 1867 as the St. Augustine's Normal School by prominent Episcopal clergy for the education of freed slaves in Raleigh, North Carolina;

Whereas St. Agnes Hospital and Training School for Nurses, the first school of nursing for African-American students in the state of North Carolina—

(1) was established by St. Augustine's Normal School in 1895; and

(2) was the only hospital in North Carolina that served African-Americans until 1960;

Whereas St. Augustine's University was the first historically Black college and university to own an on-campus commercial radio and television station; and

Whereas Talladega College—

(1) was founded by 3 former slaves in Talladega, Alabama, in 1867;

(2) is the oldest, private historically Black college and university in the State of Alabama;

(3) was the first institution in the State of Alabama to admit qualified persons of any race or ethnicity; and

(4) has produced several African-American "firsts", including—

(A) Wynona Lipman, the first African-American woman elected to the Senate of the State of New Jersey; and

(B) the Reverend Dr. Paul Smith, the first African-American minister at the First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, New York; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) honors the accomplishments of—

(A) the 9 historically Black colleges and universities that celebrated their sesquicentennial anniversaries during the week of

September 24 through September 30, 2017; and

(B) historically Black colleges and universities in general;

(2) celebrates the 150th anniversary of those 9 institutions;

(3) encourages Congress and the people of the United States to recognize the beneficial impact historically Black colleges and universities have had on the United States; and

(4) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate make available 5 enrolled copies of this resolution to the Office of the President or Chancellor of each of those 9 historically Black colleges and universities.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 1864. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. TILLIS, and Mr. SCHUMER)) proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 195, to amend title 44, United States Code, to restrict the distribution of free printed copies of the Federal Register to Members of Congress and other officers and employees of the United States, and for other purposes.

SA 1865. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. GRASSLEY) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2070, 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.

SA 1866. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Ms. WARREN) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 336, recognizing the seriousness of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome and expressing support for the designation of the month of September 2018 as "Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Awareness Month".

SA 1867. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Ms. WARREN) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 336, supra.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 1864. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. TILLIS, and Mr. SCHUMER)) proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 195, to amend title 44, United States Code, to restrict the distribution of free printed copies of the Federal Register to Members of Congress and other officers and employees of the United States, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

TITLE II—KEVIN AND AVONTE'S LAW OF 2017

SEC. 201. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the "Kevin and Avonte's Law of 2017".

Subtitle A—Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program Reauthorization

SEC. 211. SHORT TITLE.

This subtitle may be cited as the "Missing Americans Alert Program Act of 2017".

SEC. 212. REAUTHORIZATION OF THE MISSING ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE PATIENT ALERT PROGRAM.

(a) AMENDMENTS.—Section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621) is amended—

(1) in the section header, by striking "ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE PATIENT" and inserting "AMERICANS";

(2) by striking subsection (a) and inserting the following:

"(a) GRANT PROGRAM TO REDUCE INJURY AND DEATH OF MISSING AMERICANS WITH DEMENTIA AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.—Subject to the availability of appropriations to carry out this section, the Attorney General, through the Bureau of Justice Assistance and in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services—

"(1) shall award competitive grants to health care agencies, State and local law enforcement agencies, or public safety agencies and nonprofit organizations to assist such entities in planning, designing, establishing, or operating locally based, proactive programs to prevent wandering and locate missing individuals with forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, or developmental disabilities, such as autism, who, due to their condition, wander from safe environments, including programs that—

"(A) provide prevention and response information, including online training resources, and referrals to families or guardians of such individuals who, due to their condition, wander from a safe environment;

"(B) provide education and training, including online training resources, to first responders, school personnel, clinicians, and the public in order to—

"(i) increase the safety and reduce the incidence of wandering of persons, who, due to their dementia or developmental disabilities, may wander from safe environments;

"(ii) facilitate the rescue and recovery of individuals who, due to their dementia or developmental disabilities, wander from safe environments; and

"(iii) recognize and respond to and appropriately interact with endangered missing individuals with dementia or developmental disabilities who, due to their condition, wander from safe environments;

"(C) provide prevention and response training and emergency protocols for school administrators, staff, and families or guardians of individuals with dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, or developmental disabilities, such as autism, to help reduce the risk of wandering by such individuals; and

"(D) develop, operate, or enhance a notification or communications systems for alerts, advisories, or dissemination of other information for the recovery of missing individuals with forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, or with developmental disabilities, such as autism; and

"(2) shall award grants to health care agencies, State and local law enforcement agencies, or public safety agencies to assist such agencies in designing, establishing, and operating locative tracking technology programs for individuals with forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, or children with developmental disabilities, such as autism, who have wandered from safe environments.";

(3) in subsection (b)—

(A) by inserting "competitive" after "to receive a";

(B) by inserting "agency or" before "organization" each place it appears; and

(C) by adding at the end the following: "The Attorney General shall periodically solicit applications for grants under this section by publishing a request for applications in the Federal Register and by posting such a request on the website of the Department of Justice."; and

(4) by striking subsections (c) and (d) and inserting the following:

"(c) PREFERENCE.—In awarding grants under subsection (a)(1), the Attorney General shall give preference to law enforcement or public safety agencies that partner with nonprofit organizations that appropriately use person-centered plans minimizing restrictive interventions and that have a direct link to individuals, and families of individuals, with

forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, or developmental disabilities, such as autism.

"(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2018 through 2022.

"(e) GRANT ACCOUNTABILITY.—All grants awarded by the Attorney General under this section shall be subject to the following accountability provisions:

"(1) AUDIT REQUIREMENT.—

"(A) DEFINITION.—In this paragraph, the term 'unresolved audit finding' means a finding in the final audit report of the Inspector General of the Department of Justice that the audited grantee has utilized grant funds for an unauthorized expenditure or otherwise unallowable cost that is not closed or resolved within 12 months from the date when the final audit report is issued.

"(B) AUDITS.—Beginning in the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this subsection, and in each fiscal year thereafter, the Inspector General of the Department of Justice shall conduct audits of recipients of grants under this section to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse of funds by grantees. The Inspector General shall determine the appropriate number of grantees to be audited each year.

"(C) MANDATORY EXCLUSION.—A recipient of grant funds under this section that is found to have an unresolved audit finding shall not be eligible to receive grant funds under this section during the first 2 fiscal years beginning after the end of the 12-month period described in subparagraph (A).

"(D) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this section, the Attorney General shall give priority to eligible applicants that did not have an unresolved audit finding during the 3 fiscal years before submitting an application for a grant under this section.

"(E) REIMBURSEMENT.—If an entity is awarded grant funds under this section during the 2-fiscal-year period during which the entity is barred from receiving grants under subparagraph (C), the Attorney General shall—

"(i) deposit an amount equal to the amount of the grant funds that were improperly awarded to the grantee into the General Fund of the Treasury; and

"(ii) seek to recoup the costs of the repayment to the fund from the grant recipient that was erroneously awarded grant funds.

"(2) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION REQUIREMENTS.—

"(A) DEFINITION OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.—For purposes of this paragraph and the grant programs under this section, the term 'nonprofit organization' means an organization that is described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code.

"(B) PROHIBITION.—The Attorney General may not award a grant under this section to a nonprofit organization that holds money in offshore accounts for the purpose of avoiding paying the tax described in section 511(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

"(C) DISCLOSURE.—Each nonprofit organization that is awarded a grant under this section and uses the procedures prescribed in regulations to create a rebuttable presumption of reasonableness for the compensation of its officers, directors, trustees, and key employees, shall disclose to the Attorney General, in the application for the grant, the process for determining such compensation, including the independent persons involved

in reviewing and approving such compensation, the comparability data used, and contemporaneous substantiation of the deliberation and decision. Upon request, the Attorney General shall make the information disclosed under this subparagraph available for public inspection.

“(3) CONFERENCE EXPENDITURES.—

“(A) LIMITATION.—No amounts made available to the Department of Justice under this section may be used by the Attorney General, or by any individual or entity awarded discretionary funds through a cooperative agreement under this section, to host or support any expenditure for conferences that uses more than \$20,000 in funds made available by the Department of Justice, unless the head of the relevant agency or department, provides prior written authorization that the funds may be expended to host the conference.

“(B) WRITTEN APPROVAL.—Written approval under subparagraph (A) shall include a written estimate of all costs associated with the conference, including the cost of all food, beverages, audio-visual equipment, honoraria for speakers, and entertainment.

“(C) REPORT.—The Deputy Attorney General shall submit an annual report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives on all conference expenditures approved under this paragraph.

“(4) ANNUAL CERTIFICATION.—Beginning in the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Attorney General shall submit, to the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, an annual certification—

“(A) indicating whether—

“(i) all audits issued by the Office of the Inspector General under paragraph (1) have been completed and reviewed by the appropriate Assistant Attorney General or Director;

“(ii) all mandatory exclusions required under paragraph (1)(C) have been issued; and

“(iii) all reimbursements required under paragraph (1)(E) have been made; and

“(B) that includes a list of any grant recipients excluded under paragraph (1) from the previous year.

“(f) PREVENTING DUPLICATIVE GRANTS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Before the Attorney General awards a grant to an applicant under this section, the Attorney General shall compare potential grant awards with other grants awarded by the Attorney General to determine if grant awards are or have been awarded for a similar purpose.

“(2) REPORT.—If the Attorney General awards grants to the same applicant for a similar purpose the Attorney General shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives a report that includes—

“(A) a list of all such grants awarded, including the total dollar amount of any such grants awarded; and

“(B) the reason the Attorney General awarded multiple grants to the same applicant for a similar purpose.”.

(b) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act and every year thereafter, the Attorney General shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives a report on the Missing Americans Alert Program, as amended by subsection (a), which shall address—

(1) the number of individuals who benefited from the Missing Americans Alert Program, including information such as the number of individuals with reduced unsafe wandering, the number of people who were trained through the program, and the estimated number of people who were impacted by the program;

(2) the number of State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies that applied for funding under the Missing Americans Alert Program;

(3) the number of State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies that received funding under the Missing Americans Alert Program, including—

(A) the number of State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies that used such funding for training; and

(B) the number of State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies that used such funding for designing, establishing, or operating locative tracking technology;

(4) the companies, including the location (city and State) of the headquarters and local offices of each company, for which their locative tracking technology was used by State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies;

(5) the nonprofit organizations, including the location (city and State) of the headquarters and local offices of each organization, that State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies partnered with and the result of each partnership;

(6) the number of missing children with autism or another developmental disability with wandering tendencies or adults with Alzheimer's being served by the program who went missing and the result of the search for each such individual; and

(7) any recommendations for improving the Missing Americans Alert Program.

(c) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents in section 2 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 is amended by striking the item relating to section 240001 and inserting the following:

“Sec. 240001. Missing Americans Alert Program.”.

Subtitle B—Education and Outreach

SEC. 231. ACTIVITIES BY THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN.

Section 404(b)(1)(H) of the Missing Children's Assistance Act (34 U.S.C. 11293(b)(1)(H)) is amended by inserting “, including cases involving children with developmental disabilities such as autism” before the semicolon.

Subtitle C—Privacy Protections

SEC. 241. DEFINITIONS.

In this subtitle:

(1) CHILD.—The term “child” means an individual who is less than 18 years of age.

(2) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian tribe” has the meaning given that term in section 4(e) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304(e)).

(3) LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY.—The term “law enforcement agency” means an agency of a State, unit of local government, or Indian tribe that is authorized by law or by a government agency to engage in or supervise the prevention, detection, investigation, or prosecution of any violation of criminal law.

(4) NON-INVASIVE AND NON-PERMANENT.—The term “non-invasive and non-permanent” means, with regard to any technology or device, that the procedure to install the technology or device does not create an external or internal marker or implant a device, such as a microchip, or other trackable items.

(5) STATE.—The term “State” means each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia,

the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

(6) UNIT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.—The term “unit of local government” means a county, municipality, town, township, village, parish, borough, or other unit of general government below the State level.

SEC. 242. STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR USE OF NON-INVASIVE AND NON-PERMANENT TRACKING DEVICES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services and leading research, advocacy, self-advocacy, and service organizations, shall establish standards and best practices relating to the use of non-invasive and non-permanent tracking technology, where a guardian or parent has determined that a non-invasive and non-permanent tracking device is the least restrictive alternative, to locate individuals as described in subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this title.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—In establishing the standards and best practices required under paragraph (1), the Attorney General shall—

(A) determine—

(i) the criteria used to determine which individuals would benefit from the use of a tracking device;

(ii) the criteria used to determine who should have direct access to the tracking system; and

(iii) which non-invasive and non-permanent types of tracking devices can be used in compliance with the standards and best practices; and

(B) establish standards and best practices the Attorney General determines are necessary to the administration of a tracking system, including procedures to—

(i) safeguard the privacy of the data used by the tracking device such that—

(I) access to the data is restricted to law enforcement and health agencies determined necessary by the Attorney General; and

(II) collection, use, and retention of the data is solely for the purpose of preventing injury to or death of the individual wearing the tracking device;

(ii) establish criteria to determine whether use of the tracking device is the least restrictive alternative in order to prevent risk of injury or death before issuing the tracking device, including the previous consideration of less restrictive alternatives;

(iii) provide training for law enforcement agencies to recognize signs of abuse during interactions with applicants for tracking devices;

(iv) protect the civil rights and liberties of the individuals who use tracking devices, including their rights under the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States;

(v) establish a complaint and investigation process to address—

(I) incidents of noncompliance by recipients of grants under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this title, with the best practices established by the Attorney General or other applicable law; and

(II) use of a tracking device over the objection of an individual; and

(vi) determine the role that State agencies should have in the administration of a tracking system.

(3) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The standards and best practices established pursuant to paragraph (1) shall take effect 90 days after publication of such standards and practices by the Attorney General.

(b) **REQUIRED COMPLIANCE.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Each entity that receives a grant under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this title, shall comply with any standards and best practices relating to the use of tracking devices established by the Attorney General in accordance with subsection (a).

(2) **DETERMINATION OF COMPLIANCE.**—The Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall determine whether an entity that receives a grant under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this title, acts in compliance with the standards and best practices described in paragraph (1).

(c) **APPLICABILITY OF STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES.**—The standards and best practices established by the Attorney General under subsection (a) shall apply only to the grant programs authorized under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this title.

(d) **LIMITATIONS ON PROGRAM.**—

(1) **DATA STORAGE.**—Any tracking data provided by tracking devices issued under this program may not be used by a Federal entity to create a database.

(2) **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.**—Nothing in this title may be construed to require that a parent or guardian use a tracking device to monitor the location of a child or adult under that parent or guardian's supervision if the parent or guardian does not believe that the use of such device is necessary or in the interest of the child or adult under supervision.

SA 1865. Mr. McCONNELL (for Mr. GRASSLEY) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2070, 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; as follows:

On page 8, line 11, strike “part” and insert “section”.

On page 8, line 18, strike “part” and insert “section”.

On page 15, between lines 9 and 10, insert the following:

(4) **NON-INVASIVE AND NON-PERMANENT.**—The term “non-invasive and non-permanent” means, with regard to any technology or device, that the procedure to install the technology or device does not create an external or internal marker or implant a device, such as a microchip, or other trackable items.

On page 15, line 10, strike “(4)” and insert “(5)”.

On page 15, line 15, strike “(5)” and insert “(6)”.

On page 15, strike lines 20 through 25.

On page 17, beginning on line 20, strike “injury or death to the individual” and insert “injury to or death of the individual”.

On page 19, line 24, strike “requirement” and insert “standards and best practices”.

SA 1866. Mr. McCONNELL (for Ms. WARREN) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 336, recognizing

the seriousness of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome and expressing support for the designation of the month of September 2018 as “Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Awareness Month”; as follows:

On page 4, line 5, insert “and” after the semicolon.

On page 4, strike lines 6 through 7.

On page 4, line 8, strike “(D)” and insert “(C)”.

On page 4, line 15, strike “are afflicted with PCOS;” and insert “have PCOS; and”.

On page 4, strike lines 16 through 19.

On page 4, line 20, strike “(6)” and insert “(5)”.

SA 1867. Mr. McCONNELL (for Ms. WARREN) proposed an amendment to the resolution S. Res. 336, recognizing the seriousness of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome and expressing support for the designation of the month of September 2018 as “Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Awareness Month”; as follows:

In the seventh whereas clause of the preamble, strike “which” and insert “and”.

In the thirteenth whereas clause of the preamble, strike “up to 80 percent of” and insert “many”.

In the fifteenth whereas clause of the preamble, strike the semicolon at the end and insert “, which does not include the costs associated with treatment of comorbidities;”.

Strike the sixteenth whereas clause of the preamble.

MEASURES DISCHARGED, THE CALENDAR, AND MEASURES RECEIVED FROM THE HOUSE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Energy and Natural Resources Committee be discharged from further consideration of the following bills: S. 1438 and H.R. 1927; and that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of those bills and the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 49, S. 35; Calendar No. 54, S. 432; Calendar No. 55, S. 466; Calendar No. 62, H.R. 267; Calendar No. 64, H.R. 560; Calendar No. 72, H.R. 699; Calendar No. 88, H.R. 863; Calendar No. 125, S. 167; Calendar No. 148, H.R. 381; Calendar No. 170, H.R. 954; H.R. 1242, received from the House; H.R. 1306, received from the House; and H.R. 2611, received from the House.

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

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bills en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. I further ask unanimous consent that, where applicable, the committee-reported amendments be agreed to, and the bills, as amended, if amended, be considered read a third time.

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

GATEWAY ARCH NATIONAL PARK DESIGNATION ACT

The bill (S. 1438) to redesignate the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in the State of Missouri as the “Gateway Arch National Park,” was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

ESTABLISHING WITHIN THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS NETWORK

The bill (H.R. 1927) to amend title 54, United States Code, to establish within the National Park Service the African American Civil Rights Network, and for other purposes, was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

BLACK HILLS NATIONAL CEMETERY BOUNDARY EXPANSION ACT

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill (S. 35) to transfer administrative jurisdiction over certain Bureau of Land Management land from the Secretary of the Interior to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for inclusion in the Black Hills National Cemetery, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Black Hills National Cemetery Boundary Expansion Act”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **CEMETERY.**—The term “Cemetery” means the Black Hills National Cemetery in Sturgis, South Dakota.

(2) **FEDERAL LAND.**—The term “Federal land” means the approximately 200 acres of Bureau of Land Management land adjacent to the Cemetery, generally depicted as “Proposed National Cemetery Expansion” on the map entitled “Proposed Expansion of Black Hills National Cemetery—South Dakota” and dated June 16, 2016.

(3) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 3. TRANSFER AND WITHDRAWAL OF BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT LAND FOR CEMETERY USE.

(a) **CONDUCT OF DUE DILIGENCE ACTIVITIES BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Before the transfer of administrative jurisdiction and withdrawal of the Federal land under subsections (b) and (c), respectively, and subject to paragraph (2), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall complete any appropriate environmental, cultural resource, and other due diligence activities on the Federal land that would enable the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to confirm that the Federal land is suitable for cemetery purposes.

(2) **NOTICE; REQUIRED COORDINATION.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(A) before conducting any due diligence activities under paragraph (1), notify the Secretary of the activities to be conducted;

(B) as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines to be necessary in the conduct of the due diligence activities under paragraph (1), coordinate the activities with the Secretary; and

(C) if the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines, on completion of the due diligence activities under paragraph (1), that the Federal land is suitable for cemetery purposes, submit written notice of the determination to the Secretary.

(b) **TRANSFER OF ADMINISTRATIVE JURISDICTION.**—

(1) **TRANSFER.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—On receipt by the Secretary of written notice of a determination that the Federal land is suitable for cemetery purposes under subsection (a)(2)(C), except as provided in subparagraph (B), and subject to valid existing

rights, administrative jurisdiction over the Federal land is transferred from the Secretary to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for use as a national cemetery in accordance with chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code.

(B) **EXCLUSION.**—The transfer of administrative jurisdiction over the Federal land under subparagraph (A) shall not include the land located within 100 feet of the center of the Centennial Trail, as generally depicted on the map entitled “Proposed Expansion of Black Hills National Cemetery—South Dakota” and dated June 16, 2016.

(2) **LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—As soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register a notice containing a legal description of the Federal land.

(B) **EFFECT.**—A legal description published under subparagraph (A) shall have the same force and effect as if included in this Act, except that the Secretary may correct any clerical and typographical errors in the legal description.

(C) **AVAILABILITY.**—Copies of the legal description published under subparagraph (A) shall be available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of—

- (i) the Bureau of Land Management; and
- (ii) the National Cemetery Administration.

(D) **COSTS.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall reimburse the Secretary for the costs incurred by the Secretary in carrying out this paragraph, including the costs of any surveys and other reasonable costs.

(c) **WITHDRAWAL.**—On receipt by the Secretary of written notice of a determination that the Federal land is suitable for cemetery purposes under subsection (a)(2)(C) and subject to valid existing rights, the Federal land—

(1) is withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, including the mining laws, the mineral leasing laws, and the geothermal leasing laws; and

(2) shall be treated as property as defined under section 102(9) of title 40, United States Code.

(d) **BOUNDARY MODIFICATION.**—The boundary of the Cemetery is modified to include the Federal land.

(e) **MODIFICATION OF PUBLIC LAND ORDER.**—Public Land Order 2112, dated June 6, 1960 (25 Fed. Reg. 5243), is modified to exclude the Federal land.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

CERROS DEL NORTE CONSERVATION ACT

The bill (S. 432) to designate the Cerro del Yuta and Rio San Antonio Wilderness Areas in the State of New Mexico, and for other purposes, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

CLARIFYING THE DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN FEDERAL LAND UNDER THE NORTHERN ARIZONA LAND EXCHANGE AND VERDE RIVER BASIN PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 2005

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill (S. 466) to clarify the description of certain Federal land under the Northern Arizona Land Exchange and Verde River Basin Partnership Act of 2005 to include additional land in Kaibab National Forest, was ordered to be en-

grossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. NA- TIONAL HISTORICAL PARK ACT OF 2017

The bill (H.R. 267) to redesignate the Martin Luther King, Junior, National Historic Site in the State of Georgia, and for other purposes, was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

AMENDING THE DELAWARE WATER GAP NATIONAL RECRE- ATION AREA IMPROVEMENT ACT

The bill (H.R. 560) to amend the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Improvement Act to provide access to certain vehicles serving residents of municipalities adjacent to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and for other purposes, was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

MOUNT HOOD COOPER SPUR LAND EXCHANGE CLARIFICATION ACT

The bill (H.R. 699) to amend the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 to modify provisions relating to certain land exchanges in the Mt. Hood Wilderness in the State of Oregon, was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

TO FACILITATE THE ADDITION OF PARK ADMINISTRATION AT THE COLTSVILLE NATIONAL HISTOR- ICAL PARK

The bill (H.R. 863) to facilitate the addition of park administration at the Coltsville National Historical Park, and for other purposes, was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

NATIONAL MEMORIAL TO FALLEN EDUCATORS ACT

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill (S. 167) to designate a National Memorial to Fallen Educators at the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia, Kansas, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment, as follows:

(The part of the bill intended to be deleted is shown in boldface brackets and the part of the bill intended to be inserted is shown in italics.)

S. 167

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 “National Memorial to Fallen Educators Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

[Congress finds that—

[(1) from 1764 to the date of enactment of this Act, more than 119 educators from 36

States have lost their lives in the United States while performing professional duties;

[(2) the United States lacks a national memorial dedicated to fallen educators; and

[(3) a memorial to fallen educators at the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia, Kansas—

[(A) was dedicated on June 12, 2014; and

[(B) will honor educators who have lost their lives in the line of professional service.

SEC. 3. DESIGNATION.]

SEC. 2. DESIGNATION.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The memorial to fallen educators located at the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia, Kansas, is designated as the “National Memorial to Fallen Educators”.

(b) **EFFECT OF DESIGNATION.**—The national memorial designated by this section is not a unit of the National Park System and the designation of the National Memorial to Fallen Educators shall not require or permit Federal funds to be expended for any purpose related to that national memorial.

The committee-reported amendment was agreed to.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

DESIGNATING A MOUNTAIN IN THE JOHN MUIR WILDERNESS OF THE SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST AS “SKY POINT”

The bill (H.R. 381) to designate a mountain in the John Muir Wilderness of the Sierra National Forest as “Sky Point,” was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

REMOVING THE USE RESTRIC- TIONS ON CERTAIN LAND TRANSFERRED TO ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA

The bill (H.R. 954) to remove the use restrictions on certain land transferred to Rockingham County, Virginia, and for other purposes, was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

ESTABLISHING THE 400 YEARS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY COMMISSION

The bill (H.R. 1242) to establish the 400 Years of African-American History Commission, and for other purposes, was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

PROVIDING FOR THE CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN FEDERAL LAND IN THE STATE OF OREGON

The bill (H.R. 1306) to provide for the conveyance of certain Federal land in the State of Oregon, and for other purposes, was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

TO MODIFY THE BOUNDARY OF THE LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL HIS- TORIC SITE

The bill (H.R. 2611) to modify the boundary of the Little Rock Central

High School National Historic Site, and for other purposes, was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the bills.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the bills having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bills pass en bloc?

The bill (S. 1438) was passed, as follows:

S. 1438

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 “Gateway Arch National Park Designation Act”.

SEC. 2. DESIGNATION OF GATEWAY ARCH NATIONAL PARK.

(a) REDESIGNATION.—The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial established under the Act of May 17, 1954 (16 U.S.C. 450j et seq.), shall be known and designated as the “Gateway Arch National Park”.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial shall be considered to be a reference to the “Gateway Arch National Park”.

The bill (H.R. 1927) was passed.

The bill (S. 35) was passed.

The bill (S. 432) was passed, as follows:

S. 432

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 “Cerro del Norte Conservation Act”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) MAP.—The term “map” means the map entitled “Rio Grande del Norte National Monument Proposed Wilderness Areas” and dated July 28, 2015.

(2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(3) WILDERNESS AREA.—The term “wilderness area” means a wilderness area designated by section 3(a).

SEC. 3. DESIGNATION OF CERRO DEL YUTA AND RIO SAN ANTONIO WILDERNESS AREAS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), the following areas in the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument are designated as wilderness and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System:

(1) CERRO DEL YUTA WILDERNESS.—Certain land administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Taos County, New Mexico, comprising approximately 13,420 acres as generally depicted on the map, which shall be known as the “Cerro del Yuta Wilderness”.

(2) RIO SAN ANTONIO WILDERNESS.—Certain land administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, comprising approximately 8,120 acres, as generally depicted on the map, which shall be known as the “Rio San Antonio Wilderness”.

(b) MANAGEMENT OF WILDERNESS AREAS.—Subject to valid existing rights, the wilderness areas shall be administered in accordance with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.) and this Act, except that with respect to the wilderness areas designated by this Act—

(1) any reference to the effective date of the Wilderness Act shall be considered to be a reference to the date of enactment of this Act; and

(2) any reference in the Wilderness Act to the Secretary of Agriculture shall be considered to be a reference to the Secretary.

(c) INCORPORATION OF ACQUIRED LAND AND INTERESTS IN LAND.—Any land or interest in land within the boundary of the wilderness areas that is acquired by the United States shall—

(1) become part of the wilderness area in which the land is located; and

(2) be managed in accordance with—

(A) the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.);

(B) this Act; and

(C) any other applicable laws.

(d) GRAZING.—Grazing of livestock in the wilderness areas, where established before the date of enactment of this Act, shall be administered in accordance with—

(1) section 4(d)(4) of the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1133(d)(4)); and

(2) the guidelines set forth in appendix A of the Report of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs to accompany H.R. 2570 of the 101st Congress (H. Rept. 101-405).

(e) BUFFER ZONES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this Act creates a protective perimeter or buffer zone around the wilderness areas.

(2) ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE WILDERNESS AREAS.—The fact that an activity or use on land outside a wilderness area can be seen or heard within the wilderness area shall not preclude the activity or use outside the boundary of the wilderness area.

(f) RELEASE OF WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS.—Congress finds that, for purposes of section 603(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1782(c)), the public land within the San Antonio Wilderness Study Area not designated as wilderness by this section—

(1) has been adequately studied for wilderness designation;

(2) is no longer subject to section 603(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1782(c)); and

(3) shall be managed in accordance with this Act.

(g) MAPS AND LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—As soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall file the map and legal descriptions of the wilderness areas with—

(A) the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives.

(2) FORCE OF LAW.—The map and legal descriptions filed under paragraph (1) shall have the same force and effect as if included in this Act, except that the Secretary may correct errors in the legal description and map.

(3) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The map and legal descriptions filed under paragraph (1) shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Bureau of Land Management.

(h) NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION SYSTEM.—The wilderness areas shall be administered as components of the National Landscape Conservation System.

(i) FISH AND WILDLIFE.—Nothing in this Act affects the jurisdiction of the State of New Mexico with respect to fish and wildlife located on public land in the State.

(j) WITHDRAWALS.—Subject to valid existing rights, any Federal land within the wilderness areas designated by subsection (a), including any land or interest in land that is acquired by the United States after the date of enactment of this Act, is withdrawn from—

(1) entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws;

(2) location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and

(3) operation of the mineral leasing, mineral materials, and geothermal leasing laws.

(k) TREATY RIGHTS.—Nothing in this Act enlarges, diminishes, or otherwise modifies any treaty rights.

The bill (S. 466) was passed, as follows:

S. 466

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. CLARIFICATION RELATING TO A CERTAIN LAND DESCRIPTION UNDER THE NORTHERN ARIZONA LAND EXCHANGE AND VERDE RIVER BASIN PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 2005.

Section 104(a)(5) of the Northern Arizona Land Exchange and Verde River Basin Partnership Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-110; 119 Stat. 2356) is amended by inserting before the period at the end “, which, notwithstanding section 102(a)(4)(B), includes the N $\frac{1}{2}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$, the N $\frac{1}{2}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$, and the N $\frac{1}{2}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$, sec. 34, T. 22 N., R. 2 E., Gila and Salt River Meridian, Coconino County, comprising approximately 25 acres”.

The bill (H.R. 267) was passed.

The bill (H.R. 560) was passed.

The bill (H.R. 699) was passed.

The bill (H.R. 863) was passed.

The bill (S. 167) was passed, as follows:

S. 167

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 “National Memorial to Fallen Educators Act”.

SEC. 2. DESIGNATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The memorial to fallen educators located at the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia, Kansas, is designated as the “National Memorial to Fallen Educators”.

(b) EFFECT OF DESIGNATION.—The national memorial designated by this section is not a unit of the National Park System and the designation of the National Memorial to Fallen Educators shall not require or permit Federal funds to be expended for any purpose related to that national memorial.

The bill (H.R. 381) was passed.

The bill (H.R. 954) was passed.

The bill (H.R. 1242) was passed.

The bill (H.R. 1306) was passed.

The bill (H.R. 2611) was passed.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

DIESEL EMISSIONS REDUCTION ACT OF 2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 219, S. 1447.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1447) to reauthorize the diesel emissions reduction program, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (S. 1447) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 1447

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 “Diesel Emissions Reduction Act of 2017”.

SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF DIESEL EMISSIONS REDUCTION PROGRAM.

Section 797(a) of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 16137(a)) is amended by striking “2016” and inserting “2022”.

SEC. 3. RECOGNIZING DIFFERENCES IN DIESEL VEHICLE, ENGINE, EQUIPMENT, AND FLEET USE.

(a) NATIONAL GRANT, REBATE, AND LOAN PROGRAMS.—Section 792(c)(4)(D) of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 16132(c)(4)(D)) is amended by inserting “, recognizing differences in typical vehicle, engine, equipment, and fleet use throughout the United States” before the semicolon.

(b) STATE GRANT, REBATE, AND LOAN PROGRAMS.—Section 793(b)(1) of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 16133(b)(1)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (B), by striking “; and” and inserting a semicolon; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(D) the recognition, for purposes of implementing this section, of differences in typical vehicle, engine, equipment, and fleet use throughout the United States, including expected useful life; and”.

SEC. 4. REALLOCATION OF UNUSED STATE FUNDS.

Section 793(c)(2)(C) of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 16133(c)(2)(C)) is amended beginning in the matter preceding clause (i) by striking “to each remaining” and all that follows through “this paragraph” in clause (ii) and inserting “to carry out section 792”.

STRENGTHENING THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY SECURE MAIL INITIATIVE ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 241, S. 1208.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1208) to direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to provide for an option under the Secure Mail Initiative under which a person to whom a document is sent under that initiative may elect to have the United States Postal Service use the Hold for Pickup service or the Signature Confirmation service in delivering the document, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with amendments, as follows:

(The parts of the bill intended to be stricken are shown in boldface back-

ets and the parts of the bill intended to be inserted are shown in italics.)

S. 1208

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 “Strengthening the Department of Homeland Security Secure Mail Initiative Act”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) the terms “Hold for Pickup service” and “Signature Confirmation service” [means] mean the services described in sections [508.7.2.1] 507.3.0 and 503.8.1.1.a, respectively, of the Domestic Mail Manual (or any successor services);

(2) the term “Immigration Examinations Fee Account” means the account established under section 286(m) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1356(m));

(3) the term “Postal Service” means the United States Postal Service; and

(4) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Homeland Security.

SEC. 3. OFFERING HOLD FOR PICKUP AND SIGNATURE CONFIRMATION SERVICES UNDER THE SECURE MAIL INITIATIVE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Beginning not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall provide for an option under the Secure Mail Initiative (or any successor program) under which a person to whom a document is sent under that initiative may elect, except as provided in subsection (e), to have the Postal Service use the Hold for Pickup service or the Signature Confirmation service in delivering the document.

(b) FEE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in accordance with section 286(m) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1356(m)), shall require the payment of a fee from a person electing a service under subsection (a), which shall be set at a level that ensures recovery of—

(A) the full costs of providing all such services; and

(B) any additional costs associated with the administration of the fees collected.

(2) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—Of the fees collected under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

(A) deposit as offsetting receipts into the Immigration Examinations Fee Account the portion representing—

(i) the cost to the Secretary of providing the services under subsection (a); and

(ii) any additional costs associated with the administration of the fees collected; and

(B) transfer to the Postal Service the portion representing the cost to the Postal Service of providing the services under subsection (a).

(c) REGULATIONS.—The Postal Service may promulgate regulations that—

(1) subject to paragraph (2), minimize the cost of providing the services under subsection (a); and

(2) do not require the Postal Service to incur additional expenses that are not recoverable under subsection (b).

(d) NOTICE OF CHANGES.—The Postal Service shall notify the Secretary of any changes to the Hold for Pickup service or the Signature Confirmation service.

(e) USE OF PRIVATE CARRIER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary determines that a private carrier that offers substantially similar services to the Hold for Pickup and Signature Confirmation services would provide better service and value than the Postal Service provides under subsection (a), the Secretary may, in accordance with paragraph (2) of this subsection—

(A) discontinue use of the services of the Postal Service under subsection (a); and

(B) enter into a contract with the private carrier under which a person to whom a document is sent under the Secure Mail Initiative (or any successor program) may elect to have the private carrier use one of the substantially similar services in delivering the document.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary may not exercise the authority under paragraph (1) unless the Secretary—

(A) determines, and notifies the Postal Service, that the private carrier offers services that are substantially similar to the Hold for Pickup and Signature Confirmation services;

(B) provides for an option under the Secure Mail Initiative (or any successor program) under which a person to whom a document is sent under that initiative may elect a service under paragraph (1)(B);

(C) requires the payment of a fee from a person electing a service under paragraph (1)(B), which shall be set at a level that ensures recovery of—

(i) the full cost of contracting with the private carrier to provide all such services; and

(ii) any additional costs associated with the administration of the fees collected; and

(D) deposits the fees collected under subparagraph (C) as offsetting receipts into the Immigration Examinations Fees Account.

SEC. 4. REPORT.

Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that describes—

(1) the implementation of the requirements under section 3;

(2) the fee imposed under subsection (b) or (e)(2)(C), as applicable, of section 3; and

(3) the number of times during the previous year that a person used a service under subsection (a) or (e)(1)(B) of section 3.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendments be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The committee-reported amendments were agreed to.

The bill (S. 1208), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 1208

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 “Strengthening the Department of Homeland Security Secure Mail Initiative Act”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) the terms “Hold for Pickup service” and “Signature Confirmation service” mean the services described in sections 507.3.0 and 503.8.1.1.a, respectively, of the Domestic Mail Manual (or any successor services);

(2) the term “Immigration Examinations Fee Account” means the account established under section 286(m) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1356(m));

(3) the term “Postal Service” means the United States Postal Service; and

(4) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Homeland Security.

SEC. 3. OFFERING HOLD FOR PICKUP AND SIGNATURE CONFIRMATION SERVICES UNDER THE SECURE MAIL INITIATIVE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Beginning not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall provide for an option under the Secure Mail Initiative (or any successor program) under which a person to whom a document is sent under that initiative may elect, except as provided in subsection (e), to have the Postal Service use the Hold for Pickup service or the Signature Confirmation service in delivering the document.

(b) FEE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in accordance with section 286(m) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1356(m)), shall require the payment of a fee from a person electing a service under subsection (a), which shall be set at a level that ensures recovery of—

(A) the full costs of providing all such services; and

(B) any additional costs associated with the administration of the fees collected.

(2) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—Of the fees collected under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

(A) deposit as offsetting receipts into the Immigration Examinations Fee Account the portion representing—

(i) the cost to the Secretary of providing the services under subsection (a); and

(ii) any additional costs associated with the administration of the fees collected; and

(B) transfer to the Postal Service the portion representing the cost to the Postal Service of providing the services under subsection (a).

(c) REGULATIONS.—The Postal Service may promulgate regulations that—

(1) subject to paragraph (2), minimize the cost of providing the services under subsection (a); and

(2) do not require the Postal Service to incur additional expenses that are not recoverable under subsection (b).

(d) NOTICE OF CHANGES.—The Postal Service shall notify the Secretary of any changes to the Hold for Pickup service or the Signature Confirmation service.

(e) USE OF PRIVATE CARRIER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary determines that a private carrier that offers substantially similar services to the Hold for Pickup and Signature Confirmation services would provide better service and value than the Postal Service provides under subsection (a), the Secretary may, in accordance with paragraph (2) of this subsection—

(A) discontinue use of the services of the Postal Service under subsection (a); and

(B) enter into a contract with the private carrier under which a person to whom a document is sent under the Secure Mail Initiative (or any successor program) may elect to have the private carrier use one of the substantially similar services in delivering the document.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary may not exercise the authority under paragraph (1) unless the Secretary—

(A) determines, and notifies the Postal Service, that the private carrier offers services that are substantially similar to the Hold for Pickup and Signature Confirmation services;

(B) provides for an option under the Secure Mail Initiative (or any successor program) under which a person to whom a document is sent under that initiative may elect a service under paragraph (1)(B);

(C) requires the payment of a fee from a person electing a service under paragraph (1)(B), which shall be set at a level that ensures recovery of—

(i) the full cost of contracting with the private carrier to provide all such services; and

(ii) any additional costs associated with the administration of the fees collected; and

(D) deposits the fees collected under subparagraph (C) as offsetting receipts into the Immigration Examinations Fees Account.

SEC. 4. REPORT.

Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that describes—

(1) the implementation of the requirements under section 3;

(2) the fee imposed under subsection (b) or (e)(2)(C), as applicable, of section 3; and

(3) the number of times during the previous year that a person used a service under subsection (a) or (e)(1)(B) of section 3.

FEDERAL REGISTER PRINTING SAVINGS ACT OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 261, H.R. 195.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 195) to amend title 44, United States Code, to restrict the distribution of free printed copies of the Federal Register to Members of Congress and other officers and employees of the United States, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Grassley amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to, the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The amendment (No. 1864) was agreed to.

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Amendments.")

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The bill (H.R. 195), as amended, was passed.

KEVIN AND AVONTE'S LAW OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 270, S. 2070.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2070) 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.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on the Judiciary, with an amendment, as follows:

(The part of the bill intended to be inserted is printed in italics.)

S. 2070

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 "Kevin and Avonte's Law of 2017".

TITLE I—MISSING ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE PATIENT ALERT PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION

SEC. 101. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the "Missing Americans Alert Program Act of 2017".

SEC. 102. REAUTHORIZATION OF THE MISSING ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE PATIENT ALERT PROGRAM.

(a) AMENDMENTS.—Section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621) is amended—

(1) in the section header, by striking "ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE PATIENT" and inserting "AMERICANS";

(2) by striking subsection (a) and inserting the following:

"(a) GRANT PROGRAM TO REDUCE INJURY AND DEATH OF MISSING AMERICANS WITH DEMENTIA AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.—Subject to the availability of appropriations to carry out this section, the Attorney General, through the Bureau of Justice Assistance and in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services—

"(1) shall award competitive grants to health care agencies, State and local law enforcement agencies, or public safety agencies and nonprofit organizations to assist such entities in planning, designing, establishing, or operating locally based, proactive programs to prevent wandering and locate missing individuals with forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, or developmental disabilities, such as autism, who, due to their condition, wander from safe environments, including programs that—

"(A) provide prevention and response information, including online training resources, and referrals to families or guardians of such individuals who, due to their condition, wander from a safe environment;

"(B) provide education and training, including online training resources, to first responders, school personnel, clinicians, and the public in order to—

"(i) increase the safety and reduce the incidence of wandering of persons, who, due to their dementia or developmental disabilities, may wander from safe environments;

"(ii) facilitate the rescue and recovery of individuals who, due to their dementia or developmental disabilities, wander from safe environments; and

"(iii) recognize and respond to and appropriately interact with endangered missing individuals with dementia or developmental disabilities who, due to their condition, wander from safe environments;

"(C) provide prevention and response training and emergency protocols for school administrators, staff, and families or guardians of individuals with dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, or developmental disabilities, such as autism, to help reduce the risk of wandering by such individuals; and

"(D) develop, operate, or enhance a notification or communications systems for alerts, advisories, or dissemination of other information for the recovery of missing individuals with forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, or with developmental disabilities, such as autism; and

"(2) shall award grants to health care agencies, State and local law enforcement agencies, or public safety agencies to assist such agencies in designing, establishing, and

operating locative tracking technology programs for individuals with forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, or children with developmental disabilities, such as autism, who have wandered from safe environments.”;

(3) in subsection (b)—

(A) by inserting “competitive” after “to receive a”;

(B) by inserting “agency or” before “organization” each place it appears; and

(C) by adding at the end the following: “The Attorney General shall periodically solicit applications for grants under this section by publishing a request for applications in the Federal Register and by posting such a request on the website of the Department of Justice.”; and

(4) by striking subsections (c) and (d) and inserting the following:

“(C) PREFERENCE.—In awarding grants under subsection (a)(1), the Attorney General shall give preference to law enforcement or public safety agencies that partner with nonprofit organizations that appropriately use person-centered plans minimizing restrictive interventions and that have a direct link to individuals, and families of individuals, with forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, or developmental disabilities, such as autism.

“(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2018 through 2022.

“(e) GRANT ACCOUNTABILITY.—All grants awarded by the Attorney General under this section shall be subject to the following accountability provisions:

“(1) AUDIT REQUIREMENT.—

“(A) DEFINITION.—In this paragraph, the term ‘unresolved audit finding’ means a finding in the final audit report of the Inspector General of the Department of Justice that the audited grantee has utilized grant funds for an unauthorized expenditure or otherwise unallowable cost that is not closed or resolved within 12 months from the date when the final audit report is issued.

“(B) AUDITS.—Beginning in the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this subsection, and in each fiscal year thereafter, the Inspector General of the Department of Justice shall conduct audits of recipients of grants under this section to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse of funds by grantees. The Inspector General shall determine the appropriate number of grantees to be audited each year.

“(C) MANDATORY EXCLUSION.—A recipient of grant funds under this section that is found to have an unresolved audit finding shall not be eligible to receive grant funds under this section during the first 2 fiscal years beginning after the end of the 12-month period described in subparagraph (A).

“(D) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this section, the Attorney General shall give priority to eligible applicants that did not have an unresolved audit finding during the 3 fiscal years before submitting an application for a grant under this section.

“(E) REIMBURSEMENT.—If an entity is awarded grant funds under this section during the 2-fiscal-year period during which the entity is barred from receiving grants under subparagraph (C), the Attorney General shall—

“(i) deposit an amount equal to the amount of the grant funds that were improperly awarded to the grantee into the General Fund of the Treasury; and

“(ii) seek to recoup the costs of the repayment to the fund from the grant recipient that was erroneously awarded grant funds.

“(2) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION REQUIREMENTS.—

“(A) DEFINITION OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.—For purposes of this paragraph and the grant programs under this part, the term ‘nonprofit organization’ means an organization that is described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code.

“(B) PROHIBITION.—The Attorney General may not award a grant under this part to a nonprofit organization that holds money in offshore accounts for the purpose of avoiding paying the tax described in section 511(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

“(C) DISCLOSURE.—Each nonprofit organization that is awarded a grant under this section and uses the procedures prescribed in regulations to create a rebuttable presumption of reasonableness for the compensation of its officers, directors, trustees, and key employees, shall disclose to the Attorney General, in the application for the grant, the process for determining such compensation, including the independent persons involved in reviewing and approving such compensation, the comparability data used, and contemporaneous substantiation of the deliberation and decision. Upon request, the Attorney General shall make the information disclosed under this subparagraph available for public inspection.

“(3) CONFERENCE EXPENDITURES.—

“(A) LIMITATION.—No amounts made available to the Department of Justice under this section may be used by the Attorney General, or by any individual or entity awarded discretionary funds through a cooperative agreement under this section, to host or support any expenditure for conferences that uses more than \$20,000 in funds made available by the Department of Justice, unless the head of the relevant agency or department, provides prior written authorization that the funds may be expended to host the conference.

“(B) WRITTEN APPROVAL.—Written approval under subparagraph (A) shall include a written estimate of all costs associated with the conference, including the cost of all food, beverages, audio-visual equipment, honoraria for speakers, and entertainment.

“(C) REPORT.—The Deputy Attorney General shall submit an annual report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives on all conference expenditures approved under this paragraph.

“(4) ANNUAL CERTIFICATION.—Beginning in the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Attorney General shall submit, to the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, an annual certification—

“(A) indicating whether—

“(i) all audits issued by the Office of the Inspector General under paragraph (1) have been completed and reviewed by the appropriate Assistant Attorney General or Director;

“(ii) all mandatory exclusions required under paragraph (1)(C) have been issued; and

“(iii) all reimbursements required under paragraph (1)(E) have been made; and

“(B) that includes a list of any grant recipients excluded under paragraph (1) from the previous year.

“(f) PREVENTING DUPLICATIVE GRANTS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Before the Attorney General awards a grant to an applicant under this section, the Attorney General shall compare potential grant awards with other grants awarded by the Attorney General to determine if grant awards are or have been awarded for a similar purpose.

“(2) REPORT.—If the Attorney General awards grants to the same applicant for a similar purpose the Attorney General shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives a report that includes—

“(A) a list of all such grants awarded, including the total dollar amount of any such grants awarded; and

“(B) the reason the Attorney General awarded multiple grants to the same applicant for a similar purpose.”.

(b) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act and every year thereafter, the Attorney General shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives a report on the Missing Americans Alert Program, as amended by subsection (a), which shall address—

(1) the number of individuals who benefited from the Missing Americans Alert Program, including information such as the number of individuals with reduced unsafe wandering, the number of people who were trained through the program, and the estimated number of people who were impacted by the program;

(2) the number of State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies that applied for funding under the Missing Americans Alert Program;

(3) the number of State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies that received funding under the Missing Americans Alert Program, including—

(A) the number of State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies that used such funding for training; and

(B) the number of State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies that used such funding for designing, establishing, or operating locative tracking technology;

(4) the companies, including the location (city and State) of the headquarters and local offices of each company, for which their locative tracking technology was used by State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies;

(5) the nonprofit organizations, including the location (city and State) of the headquarters and local offices of each organization, that State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies partnered with and the result of each partnership;

(6) the number of missing children with autism or another developmental disability with wandering tendencies or adults with Alzheimer's being served by the program who went missing and the result of the search for each such individual; and

(7) any recommendations for improving the Missing Americans Alert Program.

(c) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents in section 2 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 is amended by striking the item relating to section 240001 and inserting the following:

“Sec. 240001. Missing Americans Alert Program.”.

TITLE II—EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

SEC. 201. ACTIVITIES BY THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN.

Section 404(b)(1)(H) of the Missing Children's Assistance Act (34 U.S.C. 11293(b)(1)(H)) is amended by inserting “, including cases involving children with developmental disabilities such as autism” before the semicolon.

TITLE III—PRIVACY PROTECTIONS**SEC. 301. DEFINITIONS.**

In this title:

(1) **CHILD.**—The term “child” means an individual who is less than 18 years of age.

(2) **INDIAN TRIBE.**—The term “Indian tribe” has the meaning given that term in section 4(e) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304(e)).

(3) **LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY.**—The term “law enforcement agency” means an agency of a State, unit of local government, or Indian tribe that is authorized by law or by a government agency to engage in or supervise the prevention, detection, investigation, or prosecution of any violation of criminal law.

(4) **STATE.**—The term “State” means each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

(5) **UNIT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.**—The term “unit of local government” means a county, municipality, town, township, village, parish, borough, or other unit of general government below the State level.

(6) **NON-INVASIVE AND NON-PERMANENT.**—The term “non-invasive and non-permanent” means, with regard to any technology or device, that the procedure to install the technology or device does not create an external or internal marker or implant a device, such as a microchip, or other trackable items.

SEC. 302. STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR USE OF NON-INVASIVE AND NON-PERMANENT TRACKING DEVICES.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services and leading research, advocacy, self-advocacy, and service organizations, shall establish standards and best practices relating to the use of non-invasive and non-permanent tracking technology, where a guardian or parent has determined that a non-invasive and non-permanent tracking device is the least restrictive alternative, to locate individuals as described in subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this Act.

(2) **REQUIREMENTS.**—In establishing the standards and best practices required under paragraph (1), the Attorney General shall—

(A) determine—

(i) the criteria used to determine which individuals would benefit from the use of a tracking device;

(ii) the criteria used to determine who should have direct access to the tracking system; and

(iii) which non-invasive and non-permanent types of tracking devices can be used in compliance with the standards and best practices; and

(B) establish standards and best practices the Attorney General determines are necessary to the administration of a tracking system, including procedures to—

(i) safeguard the privacy of the data used by the tracking device such that—

(I) access to the data is restricted to law enforcement and health agencies determined necessary by the Attorney General; and

(II) collection, use, and retention of the data is solely for the purpose of preventing injury or death to the individual wearing the tracking device;

(ii) establish criteria to determine whether use of the tracking device is the least restrictive alternative in order to prevent risk of injury or death before issuing the tracking device, including the previous consideration of less restrictive alternatives;

(iii) provide training for law enforcement agencies to recognize signs of abuse during interactions with applicants for tracking devices;

(iv) protect the civil rights and liberties of the individuals who use tracking devices, including their rights under the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States;

(v) establish a complaint and investigation process to address—

(I) incidents of noncompliance by recipients of grants under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this Act, with the best practices established by the Attorney General or other applicable law; and

(II) use of a tracking device over the objection of an individual; and

(vi) determine the role that State agencies should have in the administration of a tracking system.

(3) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The standards and best practices established pursuant to paragraph (1) shall take effect 90 days after publication of such standards and practices by the Attorney General.

(b) **REQUIRED COMPLIANCE.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Each entity that receives a grant under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this Act, shall comply with any standards and best practices relating to the use of tracking devices established by the Attorney General in accordance with subsection (a).

(2) **DETERMINATION OF COMPLIANCE.**—The Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall determine whether an entity that receives a grant under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this Act, acts in compliance with the requirement described in paragraph (1).

(c) **APPLICABILITY OF STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES.**—The standards and best practices established by the Attorney General under subsection (a) shall apply only to the grant programs authorized under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this Act.

(d) **LIMITATIONS ON PROGRAM.**—

(1) **DATA STORAGE.**—Any tracking data provided by tracking devices issued under this program may not be used by a Federal entity to create a database.

(2) **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.**—Nothing in this Act may be construed to require that a parent or guardian use a tracking device to monitor the location of a child or adult under that parent or guardian's supervision if the parent or guardian does not believe that the use of such device is necessary or in the interest of the child or adult under supervision.

TITLE IV—OFFSET BY RESTRICTING DISTRIBUTION OF FREE PRINTED COPIES OF FEDERAL REGISTER**SEC. 401. SHORT TITLE.**

This title may be cited as the “Federal Register Printing Savings Act of 2017”.

SEC. 402. RESTRICTIONS ON DISTRIBUTION OF FREE PRINTED COPIES OF FEDERAL REGISTER TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.

(a) **RESTRICTIONS.**—Section 1506 of title 44, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking “The Administrative Committee” and inserting “(a) COMPOSITION; DUTIES.—The Administrative Committee”;

(2) in subsection (a)(4), by striking “the number of copies” and inserting “subject to subsection (b), the number of copies”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(b) **RESTRICTIONS ON DISTRIBUTION OF FREE PRINTED COPIES TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE UNITED STATES.**—

“(1) **PROHIBITING SUBSCRIPTION TO PRINTED COPIES WITHOUT REQUEST.**—Under the regulations prescribed to carry out subsection (a)(4), the Director of the Government Publishing Office may not provide a printed copy of the Federal Register without charge to any Member of Congress or any other office of the United States during a year unless—

“(A) the Member or office requests a printed copy of a specific issue of the Federal Register; or

“(B) during that year or during the previous year, the Member or office requested a subscription to printed copies of the Federal Register for that year, as described in paragraph (2).

“(2) **ADMINISTRATION OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.**—The regulations prescribed to carry out subsection (a)(4) shall include—

“(A) provisions regarding notifications to offices of Members of Congress and other offices of the United States of the restrictions of paragraph (1);

“(B) provisions describing the process by which Members and other offices may request a specific issue of the Federal Register for purposes of paragraph (1)(A); and

“(C) provisions describing the process by which Members and other offices may request a subscription to the Federal Register for purposes of paragraph (1)(B), except that such regulations shall limit the period for such a subscription to not longer than 1 year.”.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on January 1, 2018.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment be agreed to, the Grassley amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to, and the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time.

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

The committee-reported amendment was agreed to.

The amendment (No. 1865) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To make technical corrections)

On page 8, line 11, strike “part” and insert “section”.

On page 8, line 18, strike “part” and insert “section”.

On page 15, between lines 9 and 10, insert the following:

(4) **NON-INVASIVE AND NON-PERMANENT.**—The term “non-invasive and non-permanent” means, with regard to any technology or device, that the procedure to install the technology or device does not create an external or internal marker or implant a device, such as a microchip, or other trackable items.

On page 15, line 10, strike “(4)” and insert “(5)”.

On page 15, line 15, strike “(5)” and insert “(6)”.

On page 15, strike lines 20 through 25.

On page 17, beginning on line 20, strike “injury or death to the individual” and insert “injury to or death of the individual”.

On page 19, line 24, strike “requirement” and insert “standards and best practices”.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the measure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Hearing none, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall it pass?

The bill (S. 2070), as amended, was passed, as follows:

S. 2070

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 “Kevin and Avonte’s Law of 2017”.

TITLE I—MISSING ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE PATIENT ALERT PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION

SEC. 101. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the “Missing Americans Alert Program Act of 2017”.

SEC. 102. REAUTHORIZATION OF THE MISSING ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE PATIENT ALERT PROGRAM.

(a) AMENDMENTS.—Section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621) is amended—

(1) in the section header, by striking “ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE PATIENT” and inserting “AMERICANS”;

(2) by striking subsection (a) and inserting the following:

“(a) GRANT PROGRAM TO REDUCE INJURY AND DEATH OF MISSING AMERICANS WITH DEMENTIA AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.—Subject to the availability of appropriations to carry out this section, the Attorney General, through the Bureau of Justice Assistance and in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services—

“(1) shall award competitive grants to health care agencies, State and local law enforcement agencies, or public safety agencies and nonprofit organizations to assist such entities in planning, designing, establishing, or operating locally based, proactive programs to prevent wandering and locate missing individuals with forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer’s Disease, or developmental disabilities, such as autism, who, due to their condition, wander from safe environments, including programs that—

“(A) provide prevention and response information, including online training resources, and referrals to families or guardians of such individuals who, due to their condition, wander from a safe environment;

“(B) provide education and training, including online training resources, to first responders, school personnel, clinicians, and the public in order to—

“(i) increase the safety and reduce the incidence of wandering of persons, who, due to their dementia or developmental disabilities, may wander from safe environments;

“(ii) facilitate the rescue and recovery of individuals who, due to their dementia or developmental disabilities, wander from safe environments; and

“(iii) recognize and respond to and appropriately interact with endangered missing individuals with dementia or developmental disabilities who, due to their condition, wander from safe environments;

“(C) provide prevention and response training and emergency protocols for school administrators, staff, and families or guardians of individuals with dementia, such as Alzheimer’s Disease, or developmental disabilities, such as autism, to help reduce the risk of wandering by such individuals; and

“(D) develop, operate, or enhance a notification or communications systems for alerts, advisories, or dissemination of other information for the recovery of missing individuals with forms of dementia, such as Alz-

heimer’s Disease, or with developmental disabilities, such as autism; and

“(2) shall award grants to health care agencies, State and local law enforcement agencies, or public safety agencies to assist such agencies in designing, establishing, and operating locative tracking technology programs for individuals with forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer’s Disease, or children with developmental disabilities, such as autism, who have wandered from safe environments.”;

(3) in subsection (b)—

(A) by inserting “competitive” after “to receive a”;

(B) by inserting “agency or” before “organization” each place it appears; and

(C) by adding at the end the following: “The Attorney General shall periodically solicit applications for grants under this section by publishing a request for applications in the Federal Register and by posting such a request on the website of the Department of Justice.”; and

(4) by striking subsections (c) and (d) and inserting the following:

“(c) PREFERENCE.—In awarding grants under subsection (a)(1), the Attorney General shall give preference to law enforcement or public safety agencies that partner with nonprofit organizations that appropriately use person-centered plans minimizing restrictive interventions and that have a direct link to individuals, and families of individuals, with forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer’s Disease, or developmental disabilities, such as autism.

“(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2018 through 2022.

“(e) GRANT ACCOUNTABILITY.—All grants awarded by the Attorney General under this section shall be subject to the following accountability provisions:

“(1) AUDIT REQUIREMENT.—

“(A) DEFINITION.—In this paragraph, the term ‘unresolved audit finding’ means a finding in the final audit report of the Inspector General of the Department of Justice that the audited grantee has utilized grant funds for an unauthorized expenditure or otherwise unallowable cost that is not closed or resolved within 12 months from the date when the final audit report is issued.

“(B) AUDITS.—Beginning in the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this subsection, and in each fiscal year thereafter, the Inspector General of the Department of Justice shall conduct audits of recipients of grants under this section to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse of funds by grantees. The Inspector General shall determine the appropriate number of grantees to be audited each year.

“(C) MANDATORY EXCLUSION.—A recipient of grant funds under this section that is found to have an unresolved audit finding shall not be eligible to receive grant funds under this section during the first 2 fiscal years beginning after the end of the 12-month period described in subparagraph (A).

“(D) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this section, the Attorney General shall give priority to eligible applicants that did not have an unresolved audit finding during the 3 fiscal years before submitting an application for a grant under this section.

“(E) REIMBURSEMENT.—If an entity is awarded grant funds under this section during the 2-fiscal-year period during which the entity is barred from receiving grants under subparagraph (C), the Attorney General shall—

“(i) deposit an amount equal to the amount of the grant funds that were improperly awarded to the grantee into the General Fund of the Treasury; and

“(ii) seek to recoup the costs of the repayment to the fund from the grant recipient that was erroneously awarded grant funds.

“(2) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION REQUIREMENTS.—

“(A) DEFINITION OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.—For purposes of this paragraph and the grant programs under this section, the term ‘nonprofit organization’ means an organization that is described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code.

“(B) PROHIBITION.—The Attorney General may not award a grant under this section to a nonprofit organization that holds money in offshore accounts for the purpose of avoiding paying the tax described in section 511(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

“(C) DISCLOSURE.—Each nonprofit organization that is awarded a grant under this section and uses the procedures prescribed in regulations to create a rebuttable presumption of reasonableness for the compensation of its officers, directors, trustees, and key employees, shall disclose to the Attorney General, in the application for the grant, the process for determining such compensation, including the independent persons involved in reviewing and approving such compensation, the comparability data used, and contemporaneous substantiation of the deliberation and decision. Upon request, the Attorney General shall make the information disclosed under this subparagraph available for public inspection.

“(3) CONFERENCE EXPENDITURES.—

“(A) LIMITATION.—No amounts made available to the Department of Justice under this section may be used by the Attorney General, or by any individual or entity awarded discretionary funds through a cooperative agreement under this section, to host or support any expenditure for conferences that uses more than \$20,000 in funds made available by the Department of Justice, unless the head of the relevant agency or department, provides prior written authorization that the funds may be expended to host the conference.

“(B) WRITTEN APPROVAL.—Written approval under subparagraph (A) shall include a written estimate of all costs associated with the conference, including the cost of all food, beverages, audio-visual equipment, honoraria for speakers, and entertainment.

“(C) REPORT.—The Deputy Attorney General shall submit an annual report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives on all conference expenditures approved under this paragraph.

“(4) ANNUAL CERTIFICATION.—Beginning in the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Attorney General shall submit, to the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, an annual certification—

“(A) indicating whether—

“(i) all audits issued by the Office of the Inspector General under paragraph (1) have been completed and reviewed by the appropriate Assistant Attorney General or Director;

“(ii) all mandatory exclusions required under paragraph (1)(C) have been issued; and

“(iii) all reimbursements required under paragraph (1)(E) have been made; and

“(B) that includes a list of any grant recipients excluded under paragraph (1) from the previous year.

“(f) PREVENTING DUPLICATIVE GRANTS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Before the Attorney General awards a grant to an applicant under this section, the Attorney General

shall compare potential grant awards with other grants awarded by the Attorney General to determine if grant awards are or have been awarded for a similar purpose.

“(2) REPORT.—If the Attorney General awards grants to the same applicant for a similar purpose the Attorney General shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives a report that includes—

“(A) a list of all such grants awarded, including the total dollar amount of any such grants awarded; and

“(B) the reason the Attorney General awarded multiple grants to the same applicant for a similar purpose.”.

(b) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act and every year thereafter, the Attorney General shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives a report on the Missing Americans Alert Program, as amended by subsection (a), which shall address—

(1) the number of individuals who benefitted from the Missing Americans Alert Program, including information such as the number of individuals with reduced unsafe wandering, the number of people who were trained through the program, and the estimated number of people who were impacted by the program;

(2) the number of State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies that applied for funding under the Missing Americans Alert Program;

(3) the number of State, local, and tribal local law enforcement or public safety agencies that received funding under the Missing Americans Alert Program, including—

(A) the number of State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies that used such funding for training; and

(B) the number of State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies that used such funding for designing, establishing, or operating locative tracking technology;

(4) the companies, including the location (city and State) of the headquarters and local offices of each company, for which their locative tracking technology was used by State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies;

(5) the nonprofit organizations, including the location (city and State) of the headquarters and local offices of each organization, that State, local, and tribal law enforcement or public safety agencies partnered with and the result of each partnership;

(6) the number of missing children with autism or another developmental disability with wandering tendencies or adults with Alzheimer's being served by the program who went missing and the result of the search for each such individual; and

(7) any recommendations for improving the Missing Americans Alert Program.

(c) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents in section 2 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 is amended by striking the item relating to section 240001 and inserting the following:

“Sec. 240001. Missing Americans Alert Program.”.

TITLE II—EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

SEC. 201. ACTIVITIES BY THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN.

Section 404(b)(1)(H) of the Missing Children's Assistance Act (34 U.S.C. 11293(b)(1)(H)) is amended by inserting “, in-

cluding cases involving children with developmental disabilities such as autism” before the semicolon.

TITLE III—PRIVACY PROTECTIONS

SEC. 301. DEFINITIONS.

In this title:

(1) CHILD.—The term “child” means an individual who is less than 18 years of age.

(2) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian tribe” has the meaning given that term in section 4(e) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304(e)).

(3) LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY.—The term “law enforcement agency” means an agency of a State, unit of local government, or Indian tribe that is authorized by law or by a government agency to engage in or supervise the prevention, detection, investigation, or prosecution of any violation of criminal law.

(4) NON-INVASIVE AND NON-PERMANENT.—The term “non-invasive and non-permanent” means, with regard to any technology or device, that the procedure to install the technology or device does not create an external or internal marker or implant a device, such as a microchip, or other trackable items.

(5) STATE.—The term “State” means each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

(6) UNIT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.—The term “unit of local government” means a county, municipality, town, township, village, parish, borough, or other unit of general government below the State level.

SEC. 302. STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR USE OF NON-INVASIVE AND NON-PERMANENT TRACKING DEVICES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services and leading research, advocacy, self-advocacy, and service organizations, shall establish standards and best practices relating to the use of non-invasive and non-permanent tracking technology, where a guardian or parent has determined that a non-invasive and non-permanent tracking device is the least restrictive alternative, to locate individuals as described in subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this Act.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—In establishing the standards and best practices required under paragraph (1), the Attorney General shall—

(A) determine—

(i) the criteria used to determine which individuals would benefit from the use of a tracking device;

(ii) the criteria used to determine who should have direct access to the tracking system; and

(iii) which non-invasive and non-permanent types of tracking devices can be used in compliance with the standards and best practices; and

(B) establish standards and best practices the Attorney General determines are necessary to the administration of a tracking system, including procedures to—

(i) safeguard the privacy of the data used by the tracking device such that—

(I) access to the data is restricted to law enforcement and health agencies determined necessary by the Attorney General; and

(II) collection, use, and retention of the data is solely for the purpose of preventing injury to or death of the individual wearing the tracking device;

(ii) establish criteria to determine whether use of the tracking device is the least restrictive alternative in order to prevent risk

of injury or death before issuing the tracking device, including the previous consideration of less restrictive alternatives;

(iii) provide training for law enforcement agencies to recognize signs of abuse during interactions with applicants for tracking devices;

(iv) protect the civil rights and liberties of the individuals who use tracking devices, including their rights under the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States;

(v) establish a complaint and investigation process to address—

(I) incidents of noncompliance by recipients of grants under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this Act, with the best practices established by the Attorney General or other applicable law; and

(II) use of a tracking device over the objection of an individual; and

(vi) determine the role that State agencies should have in the administration of a tracking system.

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The standards and best practices established pursuant to paragraph (1) shall take effect 90 days after publication of such standards and practices by the Attorney General.

(b) REQUIRED COMPLIANCE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each entity that receives a grant under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this Act, shall comply with any standards and best practices relating to the use of tracking devices established by the Attorney General in accordance with subsection (a).

(2) DETERMINATION OF COMPLIANCE.—The Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall determine whether an entity that receives a grant under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this Act, acts in compliance with the standards and best practices described in paragraph (1).

(c) APPLICABILITY OF STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES.—The standards and best practices established by the Attorney General under subsection (a) shall apply only to the grant programs authorized under subsection (a)(2) of section 240001 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12621), as added by this Act.

(d) LIMITATIONS ON PROGRAM.—

(1) DATA STORAGE.—Any tracking data provided by tracking devices issued under this program may not be used by a Federal entity to create a database.

(2) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.—Nothing in this Act may be construed to require that a parent or guardian use a tracking device to monitor the location of a child or adult under that parent or guardian's supervision if the parent or guardian does not believe that the use of such device is necessary or in the interest of the child or adult under supervision.

TITLE IV—OFFSET BY RESTRICTING DISTRIBUTION OF FREE PRINTED COPIES OF FEDERAL REGISTER

SEC. 401. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the “Federal Register Printing Savings Act of 2017”.

SEC. 402. RESTRICTIONS ON DISTRIBUTION OF FREE PRINTED COPIES OF FEDERAL REGISTER TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.

(a) RESTRICTIONS.—Section 1506 of title 44, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking “The Administrative Committee” and inserting “(a) COMPOSITION; DUTIES.—The Administrative Committee”;

(2) in subsection (a)(4), by striking “the number of copies” and inserting “subject to subsection (b), the number of copies”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(b) RESTRICTIONS ON DISTRIBUTION OF FREE PRINTED COPIES TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE UNITED STATES.—

“(1) PROHIBITING SUBSCRIPTION TO PRINTED COPIES WITHOUT REQUEST.—Under the regulations prescribed to carry out subsection (a)(4), the Director of the Government Publishing Office may not provide a printed copy of the Federal Register without charge to any Member of Congress or any other office of the United States during a year unless—

“(A) the Member or office requests a printed copy of a specific issue of the Federal Register; or

“(B) during that year or during the previous year, the Member or office requested a subscription to printed copies of the Federal Register for that year, as described in paragraph (2).

“(2) ADMINISTRATION OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.—The regulations prescribed to carry out subsection (a)(4) shall include—

“(A) provisions regarding notifications to offices of Members of Congress and other offices of the United States of the restrictions of paragraph (1);

“(B) provisions describing the process by which Members and other offices may request a specific issue of the Federal Register for purposes of paragraph (1)(A); and

“(C) provisions describing the process by which Members and other offices may request a subscription to the Federal Register for purposes of paragraph (1)(B), except that such regulations shall limit the period for such a subscription to not longer than 1 year.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on January 1, 2018.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

CONDEMNING THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN'S STATE-SPONSORED PERSECUTION OF ITS BAHAI MINORITY AND ITS CONTINUED VIOLATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 281, S. Res. 139.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 139) condemning the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment and an amendment to the preamble, as follows:

(The part of the resolution intended to be deleted is shown in boldface brackets and the part of the resolution

intended to be inserted is shown in italics.)

(The part of the preamble intended to be deleted is shown in boldface brackets and the part of the preamble intended to be inserted is shown in italics.)

S. RES. 139

Whereas in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2016, Congress declared that it deplored the religious persecution by the Government of Iran of the Baha'i community and would hold the Government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of all Iranian nationals, including members of the Baha'i Faith;

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2016 Annual Report states—

(1) “The Baha'i community, the largest non-Muslim religious minority in Iran, long has been subject to particularly severe religious freedom violations. The government views Baha'is, who number at least 300,000, as ‘heretics’ and consequently they face repression on the grounds of apostasy.”;

(2) “Since 1979, authorities have killed or executed more than 200 Baha'i leaders, and more than 10,000 have been dismissed from government and university jobs.”; and

(3) “Over the past 10 years, approximately 850 Baha'is have been arbitrarily arrested.”;

Whereas the Department of State 2015 International Religious Freedom Report states—

(1) religious minorities in Iran “continued to face societal discrimination, especially the Bahai community, which reported continuing problems at different levels of society, including personal harassment.”;

(2) the Government of Iran “continued to prohibit Bahais from officially assembling or maintaining administrative institutions, actively closed such institutions, harassed Bahais, and disregarded their property rights.”;

(3) in Iran, “Bahai blood may be spilled with impunity, and Bahai families are not entitled to restitution” and “Bahais cannot receive compensation for injury or crimes committed against them and cannot inherit property.”;

(4) the Government of Iran “requires universities to exclude Bahais from access to higher education or expel them if their religious affiliation becomes known.”; and

(5) in Iran, “Bahais are banned from government employment” and “[t]here were reports of non-Bahais being pressured to refuse employment to Bahais or dismissing Bahais from their private sector jobs.”;

Whereas, on June 8, 2016, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief issued a joint statement condemning the “wave of incitement of hatred of the Baha'i community reflected in speeches made by religious, judiciary and political officials in the Islamic Republic of Iran”;

Whereas, on September 6, 2016, the United Nations Secretary-General issued a report on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (A/71/374), which stated that “human rights violations have continued at an alarming rate”;

Whereas, on December 17, 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/70/179), which “[e]xpresse[d] serious concern about ongoing severe limitations and restrictions on the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and restrictions on the establishment of places of worship, as well as attacks against places of worship and burial, as well as other

human rights violations, including but not limited to harassment, persecution and incitement to hatred that lead to violence against persons belonging to recognized and unrecognized religious minorities, including Christians, Jews, Sufi Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Zoroastrians and members of the Baha'i Faith and their defenders”;

Whereas since May 2008, the Government of Iran has imprisoned the 7 members of the former ad hoc leadership group of the Baha'i community in Iran, known as the Yaran-i-Iran, or “friends of Iran”—Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naeimi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, and Mr. Vahid Tizfahm—and these individuals were convicted of charges including “spying for Israel, insulting religious sanctities, propaganda against the regime and spreading corruption on earth” and sentenced to 20-year prison terms, the longest sentences given to any prisoner of conscience in Iran at that time, now reportedly reduced to **[10 years]** *10 years, and Mrs. Sabet and Mrs. Kamalabadi were released in September 2017 and October 2017, respectively, upon the completion of their sentences;*

Whereas beginning in May 2011, officials of the Government of Iran in 4 cities conducted sweeping raids on the homes of dozens of individuals associated with the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (referred to in this Resolution as “BIHE”) and arrested and detained several educators associated with BIHE, with 16 BIHE educators ultimately sentenced to 4- or 5-year prison terms, 7 of whom remain in prison;

Whereas scores of Baha'i cemeteries have been attacked, and in 2014, Revolutionary Guards began excavating a Baha'i cemetery in Shiraz, which is the site of 950 graves, and built a cultural and sport center on the cemetery site;

Whereas the Baha'i International Community reported that there has been a recent surge in anti-Baha'i hate propaganda in Iranian state-sponsored media outlets, noting that—

(1) in 2010 and 2011, approximately 22 anti-Baha'i articles were appearing every month;

(2) in 2014, the number of anti-Baha'i articles rose to approximately 400 per month; and

(3) by 2016, the number of anti-Baha'i articles rose to approximately 1,500 per month;

Whereas there are currently 90 Baha'is in prison in Iran;

Whereas the Government of Iran is party to the International Covenants on Human Rights and is in violation of its obligations under such Covenants;

Whereas section 105 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8514) authorizes the President to impose sanctions on individuals “responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, the commission of serious human rights abuses against citizens of Iran or their family members on or after June 12, 2009”;

Whereas the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (Public Law 112-158) amends and expands the authorities established under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-195) to sanction Iranian human rights abusers: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights;

(2) calls on the Government of Iran to immediately release the **[7]** 5 imprisoned

Baha'i leaders, the 7 imprisoned Baha'i educators, and all other prisoners held solely on account of their religion;

(3) calls on the President and the Secretary of State, in cooperation with responsible nations, to immediately condemn the Government of Iran's continued violation of human rights and demand the immediate release of prisoners held solely on account of their religion; and

(4) urges the President and the Secretary of State to utilize available authorities to impose sanctions on officials of the Government of Iran and other individuals directly responsible for serious human rights abuses, including abuses against the Baha'i community of Iran.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I further ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment to the resolution be agreed to, the resolution, as amended, be agreed to, the committee-reported amendment to the preamble be agreed to, the preamble, as amended, be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The committee-reported amendment was agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 139), as amended, was agreed to.

The committee-reported amendment to the preamble was agreed to.

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

The resolution, as amended, with its preamble, as amended, reads as follows:

S. RES. 139

Whereas in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2016, Congress declared that it deplored the religious persecution by the Government of Iran of the Baha'i community and would hold the Government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of all Iranian nationals, including members of the Baha'i Faith;

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2016 Annual Report states—

(1) "The Baha'i community, the largest non-Muslim religious minority in Iran, long has been subject to particularly severe religious freedom violations. The government views Baha'is, who number at least 300,000, as 'heretics' and consequently they face repression on the grounds of apostasy.";

(2) "Since 1979, authorities have killed or executed more than 200 Baha'i leaders, and more than 10,000 have been dismissed from government and university jobs."; and

(3) "Over the past 10 years, approximately 850 Baha'is have been arbitrarily arrested.";

Whereas the Department of State 2015 International Religious Freedom Report states—

(1) religious minorities in Iran "continued to face societal discrimination, especially the Bahai community, which reported continuing problems at different levels of society, including personal harassment.";

(2) the Government of Iran "continued to prohibit Bahais from officially assembling or maintaining administrative institutions, actively closed such institutions, harassed Bahais, and disregarded their property rights.";

(3) in Iran, "Bahai blood may be spilled with impunity, and Bahai families are not entitled to restitution" and "Bahais cannot receive compensation for injury or crimes committed against them and cannot inherit property.";

(4) the Government of Iran "requires universities to exclude Bahais from access to higher education or expel them if their religious affiliation becomes known."; and

(5) in Iran, "Bahais are banned from government employment" and "[t]here were reports of non-Bahais being pressured to refuse employment to Bahais or dismissing Bahais from their private sector jobs.";

Whereas, on June 8, 2016, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief issued a joint statement condemning the "wave of incitement of hatred of the Baha'i community reflected in speeches made by religious, judiciary and political officials in the Islamic Republic of Iran";

Whereas, on September 6, 2016, the United Nations Secretary-General issued a report on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (A/71/374), which stated that "human rights violations have continued at an alarming rate";

Whereas, on December 17, 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/70/179), which "[e]xpressed[d] serious concern about ongoing severe limitations and restrictions on the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and restrictions on the establishment of places of worship, as well as attacks against places of worship and burial, as well as other human rights violations, including but not limited to harassment, persecution and incitement to hatred that lead to violence against persons belonging to recognized and unrecognized religious minorities, including Christians, Jews, Sufi Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Zoroastrians and members of the Baha'i Faith and their defenders";

Whereas since May 2008, the Government of Iran has imprisoned the 7 members of the former ad hoc leadership group of the Baha'i community in Iran, known as the Yaran-i-Iran, or "friends of Iran"—Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naemi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, and Mr. Vahid Tizfahm—and these individuals were convicted of charges including "spying for Israel, insulting religious sanctities, propaganda against the regime and spreading corruption on earth" and sentenced to 20-year prison terms, the longest sentences given to any prisoner of conscience in Iran at that time, now reportedly reduced to 10 years, and Mrs. Sabet and Mrs. Kamalabadi were released in September 2017 and October 2017, respectively, upon the completion of their sentences;

Whereas beginning in May 2011, officials of the Government of Iran in 4 cities conducted sweeping raids on the homes of dozens of individuals associated with the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (referred to in this Resolution as "BIHE") and arrested and detained several educators associated with BIHE, with 16 BIHE educators ultimately sentenced to 4- or 5-year prison terms, 7 of whom remain in prison;

Whereas scores of Baha'i cemeteries have been attacked, and in 2014, Revolutionary Guards began excavating a Baha'i cemetery in Shiraz, which is the site of 950 graves, and built a cultural and sport center on the cemetery site;

Whereas the Baha'i International Community reported that there has been a recent surge in anti-Baha'i hate propaganda in Iranian state-sponsored media outlets, noting that—

(1) in 2010 and 2011, approximately 22 anti-Baha'i articles were appearing every month;

(2) in 2014, the number of anti-Baha'i articles rose to approximately 400 per month; and

(3) by 2016, the number of anti-Baha'i articles rose to approximately 1,500 per month;

Whereas there are currently 90 Baha'is in prison in Iran;

Whereas the Government of Iran is party to the International Covenants on Human Rights and is in violation of its obligations under such Covenants;

Whereas section 105 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8514) authorizes the President to impose sanctions on individuals "responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, the commission of serious human rights abuses against citizens of Iran or their family members on or after June 12, 2009"; and

Whereas the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (Public Law 112-158) amends and expands the authorities established under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-195) to sanction Iranian human rights abusers: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the Government of Iran's state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights;

(2) calls on the Government of Iran to immediately release the 5 imprisoned Baha'i leaders, the 7 imprisoned Baha'i educators, and all other prisoners held solely on account of their religion;

(3) calls on the President and the Secretary of State, in cooperation with responsible nations, to immediately condemn the Government of Iran's continued violation of human rights and demand the immediate release of prisoners held solely on account of their religion; and

(4) urges the President and the Secretary of State to utilize available authorities to impose sanctions on officials of the Government of Iran and other individuals directly responsible for serious human rights abuses, including abuses against the Baha'i community of Iran.

CEILING FAN ENERGY CONSERVATION HARMONIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be discharged from further consideration of S. 2030 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title. The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2030) to deem the compliance date for amended energy conservation standards for ceiling fan light kits to be January 21, 2020, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 2030) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2030

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 “Ceiling Fan Energy Conservation Harmonization Act”.

SEC. 2. COMPLIANCE DATE FOR AMENDED ENERGY CONSERVATION STANDARDS FOR CEILING FAN LIGHT KITS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The compliance date for the amended energy conservation standards established for ceiling fan light kits in the final rule entitled “Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Ceiling Fan Light Kits” (81 Fed. Reg. 580 (January 6, 2016)) is deemed to be January 21, 2020.

(b) CONFORMING CHANGES.—Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Energy shall make such technical and conforming changes to any regulation, guidance document, or procedure as may be necessary to implement subsection (a).

EXTENDING THE PERIOD DURING WHICH VESSELS THAT ARE SHORTER THAN 79 FEET IN LENGTH AND FISHING VESSELS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO HAVE A PERMIT FOR DISCHARGES INCIDENTAL TO THE NORMAL OPERATION OF THE VESSEL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2273, introduced earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2273) to extend the period during which vessels that are shorter than 79 feet in length and fishing vessels are not required to have a permit for discharges incidental to the normal operation of the vessel.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 2273) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2273

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF MORATORIUM.

Section 2(a) of Public Law 110-299 (33 U.S.C. 1342 note) is amended by striking “December 18, 2017” and inserting “January 19, 2018”.

RECOGNIZING THE SERIOUSNESS OF POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 336 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 336) recognizing the seriousness of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome and expressing support for the designation of the month of September 2018 as “Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Awareness Month.”

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I further ask unanimous consent that the amendment to the resolution, which is at the desk, be agreed to, the resolution, as amended, be agreed to, the amendment to the preamble, which is at the desk, be agreed to, the preamble, as amended, be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The amendment (No. 1866) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the resolving clause)

On page 4, line 5, insert “and” after the semicolon.

On page 4, strike lines 6 through 7.

On page 4, line 8, strike “(D)” and insert “(C)”.

On page 4, line 15, strike “are afflicted with PCOS;” and insert “have PCOS; and”.

On page 4, strike lines 16 through 19.

On page 4, line 20, strike “(6)” and insert “(5)”.

The resolution (S. Res. 336), as amended, was agreed to.

The amendment (No. 1867) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the preamble)

In the seventh whereas clause of the preamble, strike “which” and insert “and”.

In the thirteenth whereas clause of the preamble, strike “up to 80 percent of” and insert “many”.

In the fifteenth whereas clause of the preamble, strike the semicolon at the end and insert “, which does not include the costs associated with treatment of comorbidities;”.

Strike the sixteenth whereas clause of the preamble.

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

The resolution, as amended, with its preamble, as amended, reads as follows:

S. RES. 336

Whereas Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (referred to in this preamble as “PCOS”) is a common health problem among women and girls involving a hormonal imbalance;

Whereas there is no universal definition of PCOS, but researchers estimate that between 5,000,000 and 10,000,000 women in the United States are affected by PCOS;

Whereas PCOS can affect women from the onset of puberty and throughout the remainder of their lives;

Whereas the symptoms of PCOS include infertility, irregular or absent menstrual periods, acne, weight gain, thinning scalp hair, excessive facial and body hair growth, numerous small ovarian cysts, pelvic pain, and mental health problems;

Whereas women with PCOS have higher rates of psychosocial disorders, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and eating disorders, and are at greater risk for suicide;

Whereas adolescents with PCOS often are not diagnosed;

Whereas PCOS causes metabolic dysfunction and insulin resistance, and can lead to type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, ob-

structive sleep apnea, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, and endometrial cancer at a young adult age;

Whereas PCOS is the most common cause of female infertility;

Whereas PCOS in pregnancy is associated with increased risk of gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, pregnancy-induced hypertension, preterm delivery, cesarean delivery, miscarriage, and fetal and infant death;

Whereas women with PCOS are at increased risk of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke, heart disease—the leading cause of death among women—and have a 4 to 7 times higher risk of experiencing a heart attack compared to women of the same age who do not have PCOS;

Whereas women with PCOS have a more than 50 percent chance of developing type 2 diabetes or prediabetes before the age of 40;

Whereas women with PCOS may be at a higher risk for breast cancer and ovarian cancer, and have a 3 times higher risk for developing endometrial cancer, compared to women who do not have PCOS;

Whereas many women in the United States with PCOS are overweight or have obesity;

Whereas an estimated 50 percent of women with PCOS are undiagnosed, and many remain undiagnosed until they experience fertility difficulties or develop type 2 diabetes or other cardiometabolic disorders;

Whereas the costs involved with the diagnosis and management of PCOS to the healthcare system of the United States is over \$4,300,000,000 per year during the reproductive years of patients, which does not include the costs associated with treatment of comorbidities;

Whereas the cause of PCOS is unknown, but researchers have found strong links to significant insulin resistance, which affects up to 70 percent of women with PCOS, and genetic predisposition; and

Whereas there is no known cure for PCOS: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the seriousness of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (referred to in this resolving clause as “PCOS”);

(2) supports the goals of PCOS Awareness Month—

(A) to increase awareness of, and education about, PCOS among the general public, women, girls, and healthcare professionals;

(B) to improve diagnosis and treatment of PCOS; and

(C) to improve the quality of life and outcomes for women and girls with PCOS;

(3) recognizes the need for further research, improved treatment and care options, and a cure for PCOS;

(4) acknowledges the struggles affecting all women and girls residing within the United States who have PCOS; and

(5) encourages States, territories, and localities to support the goals of PCOS Awareness Month.

CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL MISSOURI WOMEN'S SOCCER TEAM FOR WINNING THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION DIVISION II WOMEN'S SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 364, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 364) congratulating the University of Central Missouri women's soccer team for winning the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division II Women's Soccer Championship at Swope Soccer Village in Kansas City, Missouri.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I further ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 364) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

NATIONAL CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 327 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 327) designating the week of November 5 through 12, 2017, as "National Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Awareness Week."

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today we are adopting S. Res. 327, the National Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Awareness Week resolution. In 2015 I sponsored a similar resolution, National Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Awareness Month, which was inspired by the story and memory of Amanda Hansen. Ms. Hansen was a 16-year-old, living in West Seneca, NY, when she tragically lost her life to carbon monoxide poisoning while attending a sleepover at a friend's home. Her heart-breaking story focused attention on this issue and spurred action to prevent future deaths from exposure to this deadly gas. As a long supporter of this resolution, I believe that every home across our great Nation should have carbon monoxide alarms installed that can detect and prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, a silent and odorless killer. By bringing awareness to carbon monoxide poisoning and reminding our fellow Americans to diligently check their home-detection systems, Americans can take the necessary actions to ensure the safety of their loved ones.

I again send my deepest condolences to the Hansen family for their loss and to the many American families who have suffered from the passing of their

loved ones due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

With the help of Amanda's spirit, I will continue to fight for congressional action to help prevent future tragedies. Today I stand proud to be a Member of a body that unanimously supports the adoption of National Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Awareness Week.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I further ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 327) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of November 9, 2017, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

EPS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be discharged from further consideration of and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 518.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 518) to amend the Energy Policy and Conservation Act to exclude power supply circuits, drivers, and devices designed to be connected to, and power, light-emitting diodes or organic light-emitting diodes providing illumination from energy conservation standards for external power supplies, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

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

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There being no further debate, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 518) was passed.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

INTERDICTION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 2142, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2142) to improve the ability of U.S. Customs and Border Protection to interdict fentanyl, other synthetic opioids, and other narcotics and psychoactive substances that are illegally imported into the United States, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read three times and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (H.R. 2142) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

LAW ENFORCEMENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS ACT OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 2228 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2228) to provide support for law enforcement agency efforts to protect the mental health and well-being of law enforcement officers, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (H.R. 2228) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

CONNECTED GOVERNMENT ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 2331, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2331) to require a new or updated Federal website that is intended for use by the public to be mobile friendly, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (H.R. 2331) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION, AFG, AND SAFER PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4661, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4661) to reauthorize the United States Fire Administration, the Assistance to Firefighters Grants program, the Fire Prevention and Safety Grants program, and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant program, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (H.R. 4661) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 2274

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the first time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2274) to provide for the compensation of Federal employees affected by lapses in appropriations.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I now ask for a second reading and, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill will be read for the second time on the next legislative day.

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair announces, on behalf of the majority Leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 106-398, as amended by Public Law 108-7, and in consultation with the chairmen of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the Senate Committee on Finance, the reappointment of the following individual to serve as a member of the United States-China Economic Security Review Commission: James M. Talent of Missouri, for a term expiring December 31, 2019.

The Chair announces, on behalf of the Democratic leader, pursuant to the provisions of Public Law 106-398, as amended by Public Law 108-7, and in consultation with the chairmen of the Senate Committee on Armed Services

and the Senate Committee on Finance, the reappointment of the following individual to serve as a member of the United States-China Economic Security Review Commission: the Honorable Carte P. Goodwin of West Virginia, for a term beginning January 1, 2018 and expiring December 31, 2019.

ORDERS FOR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2017, THROUGH WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2018

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn, to then reconvene for pro forma sessions only, with no business being conducted, on the following dates and times, and that following each pro forma session, the Senate adjourn until the next pro forma session: Saturday, December 23, at 11 a.m.; Wednesday, December 27, at 10 a.m.; Friday, December 29, at 11:30 a.m.; and Tuesday, January 2, at 4 p.m. For the information of all Senators, when the Senate adjourns on Tuesday, January 2, 2018, it will next convene at 12 noon on January 3, pursuant to the Constitution. Further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, until 5 p.m.; finally, that following morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the Rood nomination, under the previous order.

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

ORDER VITIATED—S. 1447

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order with respect to S. 1447 be vitiated.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2017, AT 11 A.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 10:02 p.m., adjourned until Saturday, December 23, 2017, at 11 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

THE JUDICIARY

WILLIAM F. JUNG, OF FLORIDA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA, VICE ANNE C. CONWAY, RETIRED.

JILL AIKO OTAKE, OF HAWAII, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF HAWAII, VICE SUSAN OKI MOLLWAY, RETIRED.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

WILLIAM M. MCSWAIN, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT

OF PENNSYLVANIA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE ZANE DAVID MEMMEGER, RESIGNED.

BILLY J. WILLIAMS, OF OREGON, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE DISTRICT OF OREGON FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE S. AMANDA MARSHALL, RESIGNED.

DISCHARGED NOMINATIONS

The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works was discharged from further consideration of the following nominations by unanimous consent and the nominations were confirmed:

KENNETH E. ALLEN, OF KENTUCKY, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 18, 2021.

A. D. FRAZIER, OF GEORGIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 18, 2022.

JEFFREY SMITH, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 18, 2022.

JAMES R. THOMPSON III, OF ALABAMA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 18, 2021.

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL, OF ARKANSAS, TO BE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON, DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate December 21, 2017:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ROBERT CHARROW, OF MARYLAND, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

ROBERT P. STORCH, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY.

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

HESTER MARIA PEIRCE, OF OHIO, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION FOR A TERM EXPIRING JUNE 5, 2020.

ROBERT J. JACKSON, JR., OF NEW YORK, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE TERM EXPIRING JUNE 5, 2019.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

KATHERINE BRUNETT MCGUIRE, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

SUZANNE ISRAEL TUFTS, OF NEW YORK, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

KENNETH J. BRAITHWAITE, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY.

M. LEE MCLENNY, OF WASHINGTON, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY.

UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BROCK D. BIERMAN, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CHRISTOPHER ASHLEY FORD, OF MARYLAND, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND NON-PROLIFERATION).

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

TIMOTHY R. PETTY, OF INDIANA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

LINDA CAPUANO, OF TEXAS, TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENERGY INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

KATE S. O'SCANNLAIN, OF MARYLAND, TO BE SOLICITOR FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

PRESTON RUTLEDGE, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

JOHNNY COLLETT, OF KENTUCKY, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

JOHN G. VONGLIS, OF NEW YORK, TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

LEONARD WOLFSON, OF CONNECTICUT, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

IRVING DENNIS, OF OHIO, TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DOUGLAS WEBSTER, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

JON J. RYCHALSKI, OF MONTANA, TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

MORRIS K. UDALL AND STEWART L. UDALL FOUNDATION

TADD M. JOHNSON, OF MINNESOTA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MORRIS K. UDALL AND STEWART L. UDALL FOUNDATION FOR A TERM EXPIRING OCTOBER 6, 2022.

LISA JOHNSON-BILLY, OF OKLAHOMA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MORRIS K. UDALL AND STEWART L. UDALL FOUNDATION FOR A TERM EXPIRING AUGUST 25, 2018.

LISA JOHNSON-BILLY, OF OKLAHOMA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MORRIS K. UDALL AND STEWART L. UDALL FOUNDATION FOR A TERM EXPIRING AUGUST 25, 2024.

DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL, OF ARKANSAS, TO BE FEDERAL COCHAIRPERSON, DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY.

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

KENNETH E. ALLEN, OF KENTUCKY, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 18, 2021.

A. D. FRAZIER, OF GEORGIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 18, 2022.

JEFFREY SMITH, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 18, 2022.

JAMES R. THOMPSON III, OF ALABAMA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY FOR A TERM EXPIRING MAY 18, 2021.