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## Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

### PRAYER

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

Almighty God, the sovereign Lord of nations, empower our lawmakers to be as faithful to others as You have been to them. May they be willing to show patience in dealing with the shortcomings of others in the same way that You have shown them mercy and long-suffering. Lord, help them to seek to respect the beliefs and ideas of others, being tolerant even to those with whom they may disagree. Give them the wisdom to refuse to do to others what they would not want done to themselves.

Lord, we commit this day to You, totally desiring to work for Your glory.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The majority leader is recognized.

### CONGRATULATING KENTUCKY COLLEGE BASKETBALL TEAMS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, there is a simple reason nearly every Kentuckian looks forward to March—college basketball. I would like to take a moment to recognize several teams that are already making the State proud by winning their conference tournaments.

This weekend, the women of the University of Louisville won their first-ever ACC tournament title. Finishing the regular season with a record of 29 to 2, the Cardinals are currently ranked third in the Nation. Led by ACC Coach of the Year Jeff Walz and ACC Player of the Year Asia Durr, these talented women are looking to add yet another title.

So are the Murray State Racers. Its men's team won the Ohio Valley Conference championship and earned its first NCAA tournament appearance since 2012. It will look to build on the longest winning streak in the Nation.

Also in Louisville, the Bellarmine Knights men's team earned its second straight conference championship and a two-seed in the NCAA Division II tournament.

At Thomas More College, both the men's and women's teams are celebrating conference championships which earned them spots in the NCAA Division III tournaments.

Lindsey Wilson College won its conference title and is headed back to the NAIA Division I tournament for the first time since advancing to the Fab Four in 2013.

The Union College men's team clinched its fifth consecutive conference title. The Kentucky Christian Lady Knights took home the Mideast Region title as well.

I congratulate all of these conference-winning Kentucky teams, their coaches, and, of course, their dedicated fans.

### JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, we will vote on the nominations of three more talented individuals today whom the President has asked to serve as Federal district judges: Karen Scholer for the Northern District of Texas, Tilman Self for the Middle District of Georgia, and Terry Doughty for the Western District of

Louisiana. These are three excellent nominees, and I encourage all of our colleagues to vote in support of each of them.

### TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, it has been 73 days since President Trump signed historic tax reform into law.

It feels as though it has been longer than that because, practically every day, another major national employer announces a new commitment to invest in American workers because of tax reform. Every day, we hear about more local businesses realizing new savings and putting it toward equipment, expansion, and employees. Every day, we hear about how bonuses, rising wages, expanded benefits, and lower taxes are giving middle-class families a whole lot more breathing room. Yet, every day, we are reminded that some of our friends across the aisle are still desperately trying to minimize this good news. Democratic leaders have tried to say that these new jobs, raises, bonuses, and business expansions amount to no more than "crumbs."

I leave the final verdict to the hard-working families across the country, including the many Kentuckians from whom I hear. In the meantime, the economic data are painting quite an optimistic picture.

Last week, the Labor Department announced that weekly jobless claims had reached a 48-year low. Let me repeat that. Fewer Americans are filing for unemployment today than at any time since 1969. The labor market is tightening; employers are competing for talent; and workers and their families are coming out on top.

In January, Americans' real disposable income rose more quickly than it had since April of 2015. That is the biggest jump in spending money available to American families, accounting for tax rates and inflation, in nearly 3

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



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years. That is more money to save for a home purchase or a college fund. It is more to save for retirement or to spend on a family vacation. U.S. consumer confidence is higher today than it has been since the year 2000, and, last week, news broke that U.S. manufacturing is expanding at its fastest pace since 2004.

Look, it is not complicated. The bill passed by the Republicans in Congress last year was designed with a very simple philosophy in mind: that when we put more of Americans' hard-earned money back in their own pockets, they will know what best to do with it, that when we level the playing field and take weight off the shoulders of small businesses, they will help their communities thrive, and that when we welcome investment from entrepreneurs and job creators, instead of discouraging it, the economy will respond in kind.

The idea was simple enough, but as we are already seeing, because the Republicans in Congress and the President were able to overcome lockstep partisan opposition on the other side and get tax reform across the finish line, that simple idea is having an extraordinary impact.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Karen Gren Scholer, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today is the day—March 5—the deadline imposed by President Trump on those who are being protected and allowed to stay in the United States under the DACA Program.

It was last September 5 when President Trump's Attorney General held a press conference and said: That is it. The protection that is currently given

to 780,000 young people in America to allow them to stay in this country and pursue their dreams will end on March 5 of 2018—today—780,000 who were brought to the United States as infants, toddlers, children, and teenagers, who have lived their lives in this country, who have gone to school, who have never had a serious run-in with the law, who have gone through criminal background checks, come up with \$500 filing fees, and who were given permission under an Executive order by President Obama to legally stay in this country for 2 years at a time. During that period, they would not be deported, and they would be allowed to work.

Who are these young people? They are known as the Dreamers, although President Trump hates that term. They are known as the Dreamers because they represent young people who went to school in America, stood up in their classroom every day and pledged allegiance to that flag. This is the only country they have ever known. This was to be the country of their future, but at some point in their lives, a member of their family sat down and said: We have to have a serious conversation. You see, we never filed the papers when we brought you to this country as an infant, and right now you are undocumented in the United States of America.

What that means is that any minute, there could be a knock on the door and you and perhaps your entire family would be asked to leave. I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act 17 years ago. Senator HATCH was my cosponsor when I introduced it. The purpose of the DREAM Act was to say to these young people: We will give you a chance. Though you are illegal in the eyes of the law in the United States—undocumented—we will give you a chance to earn your way to legal status, give you a chance someday to be a citizen of the United States. It will not be easy. There is no helping hand for you. If you want to go to college, there will be no Federal assistance for you. You are going to have to make it on your own. You will have to work and work harder than perhaps the person sitting next to you at their desk in high school. See if you can do it. If you can, we will give you your chance.

That is what the DREAM Act said. It passed with a majority vote in the Senate many times, but it never quite made it to 60 votes, which it needs to become the law of the land.

President Obama, when he was a Senator in this Chamber, was my colleague from Illinois. He cosponsored the DREAM Act with me. So the time came when he was elected President, and I wrote him a letter. Dick Lugar, Republican of Indiana, joined me in that letter. He supported the DREAM Act when he served in the Senate. We wrote to President Obama and said: Can you do anything to give these young people a chance, to spare them from deportation? He worked on it for

1 year. Then President Obama came up with something called DACA, a program by Executive order that gave these young people their chance—780,000 of them went through the background check, paid their filing fee, and proved they were eligible.

They were spared for 2 years at a time and allowed to stay in this country. During the course of the campaign, President Trump said many strong words about immigration. We remember them well—it is hard to forget—the words about the wall, words about Mexican rapists, on and on, but he seemed to have a soft spot in his heart for these kids. Many times he would say: We have to give them a chance. They are different.

The very first time I met President Donald Trump was minutes after he had been sworn in. It was at a luncheon here in the Capitol.

I went up to him and said: Congratulations. I want to thank you for the kind words you said about the Dreamers and those protected by DACA.

He said: DICK, don't worry about those kids. We are going to take care of those kids.

That is what President Trump said on January 20, 2017. I brought it up to him several times too. It is an issue that is important to me, but, more importantly, it is an issue that is critical to the future of these young people.

Then, what happened on September 5 of last year, just 9 months after the President was sworn in? His Attorney General held a press conference and said: That is the end of the protection for these young people. As of March 5, 2018, no protection.

Then he challenged Congress. He said: Pass a law. Do what you are supposed to do here in the House and Senate. Pass a law that will protect these young people.

A number of us took up the President's challenge. We had a bipartisan effort, six of us—three Democrats and three Republicans—and we worked through some really hard issues on immigration and on these young people. I want to salute my colleagues who were part of that: LINDSEY GRAHAM, Republican of South Carolina; JEFF FLAKE, a Republican of Arizona; CORY GARDNER, a Republican of Colorado; joined with myself and MICHAEL BENNET, a Democrat of Colorado; BOB MENENDEZ, a Democrat of New Jersey, and we put together an approach that gave these young people protection and a fighting chance to prove they deserve to stay in America.

We felt pretty good about it. The President called a meeting in the White House on January 9—I remember these dates. I will always remember them—with about 25 Members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate. He held an open press conference for an hour, which is unusual and rarely done in the White House.

We talked about DACA and we talked about Dreamers and we talked about

what was going to happen next, since the President had given us a deadline of today, March 5, to do something.

The President outlined what he wanted to see, and then he said in front of the television cameras: Send me the bill, and I will sign it. I will take the heat on this one. That was January 9. So a number of us, the six I mentioned earlier, came together immediately that same day and said: Let's finish this bill, and let's get it in his hands as quickly as possible.

By January 11, 2 days later, we were ready. We reached a compromise, and it truly was a compromise. Parts of it I didn't care for at all, but that is what we do around here if Democrats and Republicans are going to produce something that might become a law. We called the President. We met the President—Senator GRAHAM and I and a number of others, and he totally rejected what we had done. In fact, the President went on to reject five other bipartisan proposals to try to solve this problem.

This is the same President who said on January 9 of this year, "Send me a bill, and I will sign it," who turned down bipartisan option after bipartisan option. He just said no.

We had a vote on the floor of the Senate. It has been about 3 weeks ago now. It was a vote on four different proposals to deal with this challenge. Not one of those proposals received 60 votes.

The one I had hoped for, a bill with a version of the Dream Act, was put together by Senator COONS and Senator MCCAIN and brought to the floor. I remember it had 52 votes. It needed 60 votes. It fell short. The bipartisan compromise led by Senator ROUNDS and Senator KING with the President's opposition ended up with 54 votes—6 votes short of what it needed to pass. Then the President's own immigration proposal came up here on the floor of the Senate. Now, there are 49 Democrats and 51 Republicans in the Senate. The President's proposal came up and got 39 votes—60 votes in opposition. It was a rejection by his own party and the Democrats in the Senate.

So here we are on March 5. The deadline is here. No bill has passed the Senate. The House will not even consider the measure—will not take up any version of the measure. What is at stake? There are 780,000 young people protected by DACA, which officially, by President Trump's order, ends today.

They have one ray of hope, perhaps two. Two courts have said they are going to suspend this abolition of DACA until we hear the arguments of the President's authority in the Constitution. So there is a temporary—and I underline temporary—injunction in place while these cases are pending, but I can tell you as a Member of the Senate and as a lawyer, no one—no one—can predict how long that protection will last. Is it a matter of days or weeks or months, at best?

That is what these young people live with, this uncertainty.

This humanitarian crisis in this country—and I call it that—was created by President Trump on September 5. He has failed to agree to six different bipartisan proposals to solve the problem he created, and now these lives hang in the balance.

Well, who are they? Who are these young people?

I was with one of them earlier today. Her name is Ana Flores. Ana grew up in Aurora, IL, and went to the public schools there. She is a very bright young woman who was brought to the United States at the age of 5 from Mexico by her parents. She is undocumented in America and lives under the protection of DACA.

What did she do with her life?

She went to the Illinois Institute of Technology, one of the best in the Nation, and she won a civil engineering degree there. Clark Dietz is an engineering firm in Illinois that stepped up and said: We want that bright young woman on our staff as an engineer, and they hired her.

I met her for the first time today. She is a wonderful person. She struggled against the odds all of her life. She is protected by DACA, a program that officially, under President Trump's edict, ends today.

Will Illinois be a better State, Chicago be a better city, the United States be a better nation with this young lady and her engineering talents at work for us? Of course, there is no question about it. Why in the world would we ever want to deport someone who has gone through our educational system and excelled like this young lady?

She is not the only one, by any means. This is a photo of Elizabeth Vilchis. She is the 109th Dreamer whom I have spoken about on the floor of the U.S. Senate. She was brought to the United States at the age of 7. She grew up in Yonkers, NY. As a child, she heard about STEM subjects—science, technology, engineering, and math. She decided to make that her life's work. She excelled in math and science and decided she would be part of the future of this country and took on these important subjects. She said: "From that point forward I made pursuing a career in STEM my responsibility, as an American."

During high school, Elizabeth was a member of the Honor Society, the Key Club, the Architecture, Construction and Engineering Program. She was editor of the yearbook and also played on the volleyball team. She graduated high school with an Advanced Regents diploma.

She was then accepted into the Honors College at City University, New York City College.

Remember, these Dreamers—these undocumented students—don't qualify for Federal assistance to go to school as most kids do. They have to find another way to work and save their money or take private loans.

She received a Community Service Award from the School of Engineering 4 years in a row for her work organizing engineering education programs for low-income students. She received a Student Leader Award for her work with an engineering student association. She was named Volunteer of the Year 4 years in a row for managing the Manhattan robotics competition.

I have seen those robotics competitions. A lot of young people in high school do some amazing things in these competitions, and it launches a career and a life in the STEM subjects.

Elizabeth graduated with a double major in mechanical engineering and political science. She worked as an engineer for Samsung for 2 years. Then she founded a nonprofit organization focused on creating funding opportunities for early stage technology startups. Today, Elizabeth's nonprofit has over 700 members. To date, they have raised over \$8 million to grow their companies.

She wrote me a letter and Elizabeth said:

To me DACA is my opportunity to give back to the United States and my family the way I dreamed of since I was 10 years old. It's the ability to help solve the STEM talent shortage after 15 years of preparing for it and being told it was impossible. It's the power to say "No" to going back to the shadows and "Yes" to serving as a role model for young girls across the country who aspire to be engineers and entrepreneurs.

People like Elizabeth are the reason why more than 400 business leaders signed a letter to Congress urging us to pass the bipartisan Dream Act.

The letter says:

Dreamers are vital to the future of our companies and our economy. With them, we grow and create jobs. They are part of why we will continue to have global competitive advantage.

It would be a personal tragedy for us to deport Elizabeth Vilchis, but the decision of President Trump to abolish the program that protects her, sadly, makes that a possibility. If this injunction by the court is lifted, at that moment, there could be a knock on her door—or perhaps on the door of the company that hires her or her engineering firm—and she could be told that her time is up. Under President Trump, she has to leave the United States of America.

President Trump created this crisis. Instead of working toward a solution, he has rejected every bipartisan effort that has been sent his way to save the Dreamers.

What will happen next? Do we have to stand by and watch as these families are divided, as talented young people like Elizabeth and Ana are deported? Is that what we are all about? Is that what the President meant when he told me "We'll take care of those kids"? That is what it has come down to.

It is a sad reality that all across America, hundreds of thousands of these young people now live in fear of deportation. They should be living, as Elizabeth said, outside the shadows and

as part of America and its future. What can we do about it? I am at a loss.

Unless and until this President accepts the responsibility to help us solve the problem he created, I am afraid we will never be able to rally the necessary Republican votes to make this a reality. It is up to President Trump.

In the part of the world that I come from in the Middle West, there is a saying that I am going to clean up a little bit, and it goes something like this: Any old mule can kick down a barn door, but it takes a carpenter to build one. This President has kicked down DACA, kicked it down to the dirt, and this is the day—the deadline that he set. The question is, Does he have the will or the heart to rebuild it?

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII and the order of March 1, the confirmation vote on the Doughty nomination occur following the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to S. 2155, with all other provisions of the previous order in effect.

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

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I enjoyed listening to the minority whip, and I don't believe the President is as heartless as he is indicating, but the President does want the American laws to be observed. There are ways of getting that done, and I think he is doing some of that to see that it is done. I happen to empathize very much with Senator DURBIN from Illinois and have long been a supporter of the Dreamers.

(The remarks of Mr. HATCH pertaining to the introduction of S. 2495 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### GUN SAFETY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, it is nice to hear my colleague's words. I would also want to mention a few things about the same issue.

Mr. President, it has been nearly 3 weeks since the shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL. Still, unfortunately, the majority leader hasn't committed to any floor time for the debate on the issue of gun safety—no time to debate universal background checks, a policy that over 90 percent of Americans support, including the vast majority of gun owners; no time to debate protective orders to allow law enforcement to temporarily disarm individuals who have shown credible signs of being a harm to themselves or others, especially relevant after Parkland; no time to at least have a debate on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines on the floor of the Senate.

The kids who survived that horrific shooting are speaking up and speaking out and are demanding that we address this issue head-on. I believe they are moving the conscience of the Nation. I met with them. They are fine young men and women. Instead of just cursing the darkness after what they went through with the losses of friends and colleagues they suffered, they are trying to light a candle, urging us to debate and do something real. Yet, the majority leader is moving to a banking bill today with no promise of time to consider a package of commonsense gun safety measures.

We need to debate them on the floor. We can't just try to do one little bill by UC with no debate or put it into some other big bill. This needs a national debate. This issue is consuming America, and for the Senate to turn its back and do nothing, or to try to just slip some minor measure through, doesn't work.

Last week, America watched President Trump whipsaw on gun safety issues in a matter of days. All of America felt pretty good when the President met with a bipartisan group. He seemed to be open to tackling gun safety in a bipartisan way in a nationally televised meeting. Then, the next day, he met with the NRA behind closed doors and seems to once again have backed off.

It is a show we have seen before, and it is getting old. Too many times we have watched the President say the right things when the cameras are on but refuse to follow through the moment they are switched off—oftentimes doing a 180-degree reversal of his position.

On the issue of gun safety, just like the issue of immigration, we could find a bipartisan consensus. It is very possible, but it requires the President to show some leadership, some follow-through, and some consistency. Otherwise, Congress will do what it has done after every mass shooting for the past decade—nothing.

Those brave, young students will be here in a few weeks, having watched Congress do nothing again. What a black mark that will be—lowering the even low ratings of this body.

#### REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. President, on to another matter, the Republican tax bill. Over and over, we have heard the Republican mantra that their tax bill was aimed at giving working Americans a boost. Yet every analysis showed that when you looked at the actual policy, the lion's share of the tax cuts are going to corporations and the richest 1 percent. According to one study, 83 percent of the benefits from the Republican tax bill go to the top 1 percent of earners.

Don't worry, our Republican friends say, that money will trickle down to workers, but trickle-down economics has never worked. It has failed time and again. Most of our Republican colleagues are even afraid to admit that the majority of the tax cuts go to the very wealthy. They simply say it is

helping working people, but their mechanism of trickle-down is something they will not utter in public.

Instead of giving workers major wage increases, hiring new workers, or investing in new equipment and research, the most popular use of the savings from the tax bill for corporations is corporate share buybacks. That is from the big corporations. Already, big corporations have announced more than \$200 billion in share buybacks this year. We just started March, and already, corporations are on pace to spend over \$1 trillion this year buying back their own stock.

The problem here is, share buybacks don't really help workers. They don't really help grow the economy. They are a quick way for a big corporation to take more of their stock off the market, raising the value of the shares. Who benefits? Well, corporate executives who own lots of these shares and wealthy shareholders who hold the vast preponderance of the shares.

As one economist told Bloomberg, "You're not going to get the macroeconomic benefit the administration thought it was going to get from its tax cuts. It's going to go to the areas that don't stimulate growth," namely, buybacks, dividends. An analysis by Just Capital, which the New York Times called "one of the most detailed accountings to date" of how companies are spending the windfall from tax reform, finds that "just 6% of capital allocated so far is going to [employees], while 58% is going to shareholders in the form of dividends, share buy-backs, or retained earnings." That is 6 percent for the workers and nearly 60 percent to share buybacks and other corporate benefits.

Today, the Joint Economic Committee, led by our wonderful ranking member, Senator HEINRICH, pointed out that if you distributed the savings that went to just one big company—Berkshire Hathaway, which gained \$29 billion as a result of the tax bill—you could give a \$1,000 bonus to 29 million Americans.

This is amazing. That is the equivalent of every employee in Arizona, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia combined from just one company's worth of savings. The public is beginning to realize what is going on here. They see they are putting their children and grandchildren into deep debt, not to benefit themselves, the workers, preponderantly, but to benefit corporate leadership, owners of shares—the vast preponderance of whom are in the top 10 percent of American wealth.

Corporations are not putting the vast preponderance of the money where they should be—raising the salaries of workers or increasing productivity of the company by investing in new machinery and new techniques. No; it is that quick hit, the stock buyback.

It goes to show how beneficial tax reform could have been if it were aimed

at the middle class and those struggling to reach it. Instead, the Republicans made a conscious effort to give corporations and the wealthiest Americans the bulk of the tax cuts and promised it would trickle down to everyone else. Unfortunately, past is prologue, and corporate America will invest in what is best for corporate America, while working America is getting left behind.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator for Texas.

ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGULATORY RELIEF, AND  
CONSUMER PROTECTION BILL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this week, we will be voting on an important piece of bipartisan legislation that recently passed out of the Senate Banking Committee, led by our colleague, Chairman MIKE CRAPO.

The bill is called the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act. The purpose of the bill is to rightsize the onerous regulations that are currently imposed on community and independent banks and that stifle their ability to loan money to people who need access to credit in order to start a business or to grow a small business.

Under the current law famously known as Dodd-Frank, these smaller banks are often treated just like the largest banks and financial institutions in our economy. That doesn't make any sense at all. Main Street, we need to remind some of our colleagues, is not Wall Street.

The bill would make changes to reflect that important distinction. I can't tell you how many of my small bankers in Texas have told me they had to hire additional personnel, not to make more loans, just to comply with the onerous overregulation coming out of Washington, DC.

Unfortunately, we lost over 2,000 banks nationwide since the end of 2010. Two thousand banks have gone out of business, either as a result of a merger with a larger bank that could sustain the additional cost of complying with these regulations or those that have just given up and said: We can't cut it because of the costs, and we are hanging up our spurs. In Texas, 165 bank charters have vanished during that same timeframe—a 26-percent reduction. Like I said, some of the decline is due to mergers with larger banks, but there have also been a number of bank failures.

We all heard about too big to fail, but some institutions were deemed essentially too small to save. They were the ones left behind and forgotten under Dodd-Frank. Because of the regulatory burdens, some small banks said enough is enough and opted to get out of the lending business altogether. You know who ends up paying the price and who ends up getting hurt? It is the married couple who wants to borrow money to buy their first home or, as I said earlier, a business that wants to expand and hire more people. Those are the people who ultimately get hurt.

In this bill we are considering this week, we are trying to change that situation. No less than former Congressman Barney Frank—the Democratic author of the original law—has emphasized the point that we need now to remember: The bill we are voting on keeps in place rules and regulations that were imposed on large Wall Street banks after the financial crisis. In other words, the big banks on Wall Street were the ones that helped contribute to the financial crisis, and they are the ones that will continue to be regulated under Dodd-Frank, but the community and regional banks that were, in essence, the collateral damage to the great recession of 2008, following the big financial crisis, will finally see some needed and welcomed relief. Rigorous stress testing of large financial institutions will continue. Congressman Frank has said it would be “wholly inaccurate” to claim otherwise.

So when some try to distort the bill's purpose and the provisions in the days ahead, I think it is important to keep that in mind and don't buy what they are selling. This bill will mostly, as I said, affect smaller community banks, which clearly don't fall under the same category as the titans of global finance.

Last year, the Banking Committee solicited input from a broad array of stakeholders. The committee's idea was to say: Hey, all of you out there who greatly suffered under Dodd-Frank, how can we reduce the burdens you face? Those are the kind of questions all of us need to be asking back in our States.

After extensive negotiations at all levels, and after hearing not just from financial entities great and small but also from consumer groups, the result is the bipartisan legislation we will soon consider on the Senate floor.

The bill was formally introduced by a group of 10 Democrats and 10 Republicans. You don't get much more bipartisan than that. I know the Senator from Idaho, the chairman of the committee, has had productive discussions as well with my friend and fellow Texan Chairman HENSARLING on the House side, who heads up the House Financial Services Committee.

While the new provisions will help community banks, credit unions, as well as mid-sized and regional banks, they will also ensure that key consumer protections remain in place. Some of these protections will even increase for consumers who have fallen on hard financial times or who are victims of fraud. Veterans and seniors particularly will benefit.

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell has agreed that this common-sense bill will provide significant regulatory relief, and his predecessor, Janet Yellen, said it was a move in a good direction.

While I would like to go further and provide additional relief from Dodd-Frank, we should nonetheless pass as much as we can and help America's

local lenders build small businesses and strengthen our local communities.

Let's get this bill—which is supported by a variety of stakeholders, including the Texas Independent Bankers Association—across the finish line this week.

I wish to especially congratulate and thank our colleague from Idaho for all of his hard work, and I hope that all of us can emulate that hard work on a bipartisan basis to get this bill across the Senate floor and ultimately to the President for his signature.

#### TAX REFORM

Mr. President, I would like to shift gears for a moment and discuss a matter that my friends back home in Texas are talking about a lot, and that is the benefits of tax reform.

I happened to walk out here just as the Democratic leader, the Senator from New York, was saying that tax reform is not working. Well, I note that his message seems to be a little out of sync with the news, which in part reported today that the number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits is at its lowest level in more than 49 years. In other words, our economy is finally growing again, and it is working again for the people who needed the jobs and needed the income that are provided by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Sometimes I wonder whether our Democratic friends, who took great political risk by voting uniformly to a person to oppose the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, are worried not that it will not work but that it will work and they will be proved completely wrong in anticipating what the impact of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will be. In particular, Ms. PELOSI, the minority leader of the House, said that these were crumbs—crumbs. Well, I think she will be proved wrong, and that will be to the great benefit of all of the people of America.

So everyone remembers, this was not an easy lift. We passed the first tax reform in more than 30 years. The immediate consequences of the bill have been transformative. In other words, we just did this in December, but we have already seen encouraging signs.

My constituents in Texas know as well as anyone—just ask a man by the name of Scott McDonald, who called my office last week. Scott owns a residential roofing company in Burleson, which is near Dallas. It is called F-Wave, and its mission is to “create the best [roofing] shingle the world has ever seen. Period.” That is Scott's dream. Do you know what Scott told us over the phone? He said that his 47 employees are really feeling the positive impact in their paychecks. He said: “There are a lot of happy people around here.”

People are happy because of the reduced tax rates. Now that the IRS has updated its withholding tables, in February people saw the first boost in their take-home pay they have seen in a long, long time.

Scott also said that the positive climate has created a lot of incentive for

his company to invest and grow. If you think about it, looking at what has happened in the stock market and, more importantly, what it has done to 401(k)s and pension plans and people's savings, there is a lot of enthusiasm and newfound confidence in the American economy, and that is an unequivocally good thing. Scott sees that in his place of business. He said that it has created a lot of incentive for his company to invest and grow, and that is good for the people who will benefit from those jobs. He is looking to hand out bonuses when the company's fiscal year ends at the end of this month, and he is hoping that a new facility his company is building will create jobs for as many as 500 people. You heard me right earlier. He said 47 people work there now, and he is hoping that this new facility will create jobs for as many as 500 people.

Scott, we appreciate your story, and we are glad you took the time to share it.

Back home in Texas, we are trying to keep track of all the tax reform successes, but there are so many, sometimes it is hard to keep up.

In West Texas, El Paso Electric has just announced that homeowners will get new refunds on their electric bills due to the lower tax rate. Seniors, people on fixed incomes, will actually see their utility bills go down because of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. What great news.

In Helotes, which is right outside of San Antonio, my friend, Representative WILL HURD, who represents that area, tells us that Jeff and Mary Marsh, the owners of two coffee shops, are particularly thrilled. They are passing along the tax savings directly to their staff of 11 employees in the form of increased hourly wages, benefits packages, and bonus programs. They hope to upgrade their systems and equipment and expand with new locations too.

Stories like these sure don't sound like "Armageddon." That is the term House Minority Leader PELOSI used to describe the tax reforms last year, in addition to calling them "crumbs." She called them "Armageddon" and "crumbs." Well, I am not sure how those two go together, but she and other Democrats did their dead-level best to scare the living daylights out of the American people and to tell them that this would not work and that it would actually hurt them.

I heard the Democratic leader, my friend from New York, Senator SCHUMER, out here talking about how money that is being brought back from overseas isn't being invested properly here in the United States, as if it were the government's money. The whole point is that this is not the government's money, this is money earned by the people and the businesses that take the risks and that we need to succeed so that our country will succeed and we will continue to grow so that the American dream can remain alive.

It is almost as if they think that any money saved as a result of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is somehow stolen from the clutches of the Federal Government that knows how to spend that money better than they do. Well, I certainly have a different view.

I guess, though, our Democratic colleagues were not totally off base in mentioning Armageddon because the tax cuts did spell doom for progressive rationales and excuses for not cutting taxes and making our system more competitive globally. It really was Armageddon when you consider what it did to their outrageous arguments.

Our reforms have exploded the notion that the only way government can ensure prosperity is with higher taxes. Again, it is based on this crazy idea that the money you earn is not really yours to keep, it is the Federal Government's, and the government will only let you keep a certain amount of it, and that when we cut taxes, it actually somehow is not money that is yours in the first place. It seems like it is completely reverse logic.

The bill's well-documented effects have killed the ludicrous claims we heard before Christmas that Americans who faced stagnant wages for years wouldn't really benefit from the raises or that companies are incapable or unwilling to actually give those raises or invest in their businesses and create new jobs. I wonder what the critics have to say about all this now. They have mostly been quiet since the good news started rolling in—although I guess, listening to my friend from New York, they have not given up entirely.

I wonder what they have to say to organizations like the Health Care Service Corporation, which operates Blue Cross Blue Shield in my State. Thanks to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, it has announced a \$1.5 billion initiative to make health insurance more affordable. This \$1.5 billion initiative to make health insurance more affordable comes as more good news to men and women like those in my State who have struggled to pay for healthcare.

I wonder what the naysayers have to say to this one lady in particular. I am thinking about somebody from Lewisville, TX. She recently contacted me and preferred not to be identified. Originally in my remarks, I was going to mention her name, but out of respect for her privacy, let me just tell her story and leave her name out of it. She had surgery a while back and had to borrow money up front to pay for it. On top of her student loans, this stressed her out. She was pretty anxious. She was wondering: How am I going to pay these bills? Well, in her note that she sent to my office, she said that she is extremely grateful for the reduced taxes because now she brings home an additional \$125 in each paycheck—\$125. That \$125 helps her pay the bills she was so worried about.

I hope our friends across the aisle who opposed this bill uniformly—every single one of them voted against it—I

hope they will listen not to our claims but, rather, to the evidence and realize that this \$125 to this woman from Lewisville, TX, is not crumbs; it is the difference between living in fear that she will not be able to meet her obligations and living in peace knowing that she is going to be able to meet those responsibilities. Her story is America's story, too, and it is a snapshot of what is occurring in the economy.

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said last week that "some of the headwinds the U.S. economy faced in previous years have [now] turned into tailwinds." The economy continues to pick up steam.

I have already mentioned that the number of people making unemployment claims is at its lowest level in the last 49 years, but when you look at consumer confidence, when you look at the stock market, when you look at businesses willing to invest in new plants and equipment and you see the benefits of employers competing for labor—you know, one of the benefits of seeing unemployment so low and the economy growing again is that employers are going to have to start bidding up for the workers they need in order to do the job. What that means is that wages, which have been stagnant for so many years, are now going to grow again. So in addition to the lower rates, people will have more take-home pay. They are going to see more take-home pay in addition because of the increased wages they are going to be able to demand for their hard work.

These are great and positive signs, but we have to keep telling the good stories because they so often get drowned out by the scare tactics and the hyperbole that comes from those who seem to be afraid—not that this will not work but, rather, that it will work and they will be proved terribly wrong.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FLORIDA HURRICANE DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, it has been almost 6 months since Hurricane Irma struck Florida. It has been about a month since we passed the most recent disaster supplemental appropriations bill, which finally included the money for Florida's fisheries, citrus growers, and communities across the State that we have been fighting for since day one, since the storm passed.

Today, I spoke to the Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross, and I asked him to immediately release this critical funding to help the people of our State. Florida's fishermen are still waiting for their help too.



Hurricane Irma caused extensive damage to vessels, facilities, docks, equipment, and gear, especially in the Keys. Many in the spiny lobster industry lost all of their traps. The disaster supplemental appropriations gave NOAA \$200 million for Federal fishery disasters like the one that Secretary Ross declared for Florida. Where is the money?

Let's talk about the broader impact to the oceans. Did you know that Florida's coral reef tract is the third largest barrier reef in the world? It is a reef that starts south of Key West and goes all the way up the coast, almost all the way to Fort Pierce. The coral supports the spiny lobsters and the stone crabs, which are served in restaurants around the country. This industry is important to Florida's economy.

Hurricane Irma tossed all manner of debris around. Monroe County has already spent almost \$20 million to remove over 2 million cubic yards of waste—roofs, appliances, bicycles, trailer homes, and boats. The debris was also swept into the water, which is threatening the corals, and into the canals, where it blocks transportation.

I want you to take a look at this picture. This is one of the canals in the Keys. Look at what is sitting in the canal—a whole mobile home that was lifted up from the mobile home park on this side of the canal. There it is, in the water.

Take a look at this. Do you see what is in the canal? Do you see out here? That is the ocean. This canal is coming right in. What happens is that eventually some of the debris goes into the Atlantic. It gets near the reef. Some of it submerges. The wave action is sending it back and forth.

You can imagine any one of those pieces of debris knocking constantly into delicate coral that is already diseased, that is already overheated because the rising temperature of the water. You can imagine what is happening. Whether it is a mobile home sitting in the canal or whether it is all of this junk that is sitting in the canal and that eventually goes out, this is what we need help with.

It has been over a month since we passed the disaster supplemental appropriations bill. Why isn't the money flowing? That is what I called the Secretary of Commerce about this morning. I told him: Mr. Secretary, my request is very, very simple. Just get the money out. The money is appropriated. It is there.

I said: Mr. Secretary, will you please crack the whip on NOAA so that you can get this money out and we can get this place cleaned up, as well as protect those coral reefs from the damage they have already undergone?

Then I said: What happened in this storm is, whether for lobster or stone crab, the traps were all swept away. The poor fishermen don't have any traps. They need help too. That is what this disaster appropriations bill is for. Mr. Secretary, you have to crack the whip to get them going.

Unfortunately, this is not the only issue we are facing. Florida's citrus industry suffered over \$760 million in losses from the storm. Why? Because the trees were full of fruit that was going to be picked within just a few weeks. Along came the storm; the winds were severe. In Southwest Florida, some of the citrus crops were 100 percent lost. In fact, the winds were so high that they ended up uprooting citrus trees. Further north, in Central Florida, the groves there lost 50 to 60 percent of their crops.

The citrus industry cannot survive those kinds of losses, and that is why we have a disaster appropriations bill. There were losses of over \$760 million from the storm. The rest of Florida's agriculture took a big hit, too, with an estimated \$2.5 billion in total damages.

In February, we finally came through with \$3.8 billion for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Of that money, \$2.6 billion was supposed to go directly to farmers and ranchers. It is March, and those folks haven't seen a dime.

After I talked to the Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross, I put in a call to the Secretary of Agriculture. I have called several times today. I have yet to connect with him. If any of his staff are listening, there is a bottleneck at the USDA that is preventing this money from going to the families who desperately need it. I will continue to call Secretary Perdue to ask him to do what I asked Secretary Wilbur Ross to do: Crack the whip on his organization to get the money flowing. That is why we passed supplemental emergency appropriations. Now the Federal agencies need to get the money out the door.

This is so frustrating because the administration knew that Congress was discussing a disaster supplemental bill when Hurricane Harvey hit Texas in August. Then Irma hit, and then Maria hit.

Six months later, most of the Federal agencies are just starting to dust off their pencils and figure out how they are going to allocate the funding. What is wrong with you? People are hurting. They are going bankrupt. You have to get that money out.

Can you imagine how you would feel if your family's entire citrus crop had been wiped out and you had been holding your breath waiting for disaster assistance funding, which finally came over a month ago, and then you were told by the folks at the USDA that you were going to have to wait for several more months until USDA figures out how to get you the money? It is no wonder that people are fed up with bureaucracy.

Additionally, many of our cities and counties have yet to see any reimbursements from FEMA for Hurricane Irma. In fact, many have yet to be fully reimbursed for Hurricane Matthew, which struck almost 2 years ago. Unbelievably, all those counties that were devastated had paid for the debris removal. The State of Florida missed the deadline—didn't turn it in on time.

Of course, what we had to do to cover the State of Florida's mistake was to plead with FEMA: Forget the mistake; it is the local counties and cities that need the money.

Not getting the money out is totally unacceptable. While we are still waiting for reimbursements from these storms, how can we expect these local governments to prepare for the 2018 hurricane season that will start in just a few months, right around the corner?

Let me say it again. This is unacceptable for the slow-walking—the foot-dragging—that is going on in getting the money out the door. I am going to keep pounding on this until the folks in Florida start getting the help they need and deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

#### GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, since I see no other Senator who seeks recognition, I thought I would take the occasion to bring the Senate up to date on what is happening down in Florida in the aftermath of 17 people being gunned down at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

As we know, we have seen those students speak out with a boldness and clarity that is rarely seen, and they are not being intimidated at all as to what needs to be done. As a matter of fact, in the aftermath of the shooting—and while some of the funerals have still been going on—since our Florida State Legislature is in session, over the course of 2 weeks, the students have gone to the capital city of Tallahassee and have held individual meetings with State legislators. They have held a rally outside of the capital and insisted that maybe—just maybe—this might be a time that the State legislature should confront this issue head-on: that, in fact, there was something to the fact that a weapon that was originally developed for the military, an AR-15—the semiautomatic version of a military weapon—could do such damage and quickly go about killing so many people. It was 17 in the case of the high school.

Just 2 years earlier, it was 49 people in Orlando at the Pulse nightclub. In between, we saw several mass killings with high-powered, military-style assault rifles in Texas, as well as 59 people being gunned down in Las Vegas.

Last week, I talked about the assault weapon, and I have since had, over the weekend, constituents in Florida ask me to come back and speak on the floor of the Senate about the difference in the damage—the mayhem, the carnage, the slaughter—that occurs as a result of an assault rifle as compared to a handgun. You don't have to take it from this Senator. You can talk to the trauma surgeons. You can talk to the radiologist in the trauma center. As a matter of fact, several articles in the past week have been written in various publications in Florida and in the national press, along with there being

photographs to show the difference. Let me paraphrase the words of one of the trauma surgeons in Broward County who attended to some of the victims.

He cited that on any normal night, particularly on a weekend, they have to treat gunshots. If that gunshot is from a handgun—say, a .22 pistol or, say, a .9 millimeter pistol—the bullet will enter the victim, and unless that bullet goes to a critical organ, such as the heart or, for example, to the blood supply going into the liver, that bullet will continue through. If it comes out the other side, it will come out with a hole that is the same size as when it penetrated the body in the first place. It is not so with a bullet from an assault rifle because those weapons, which are developed for the military, are clearly for killing.

The bullet, first of all, comes out at three times the speed—three times the velocity. Therefore, when it hits its target, it hits with three times the energy. Often, the bullet is designed so that when it hits the target, it will tumble and just tear through and destroy any flesh in its path, including bone and organs.

The trauma center's radiologist explains that if a handgun's bullet, such as a .9 millimeter, goes through the liver, they can usually save the patient's life. They point out that of almost all handgun wounds, they can save the life unless the bullet hits a major artery or organ, like the heart, or a major blood supply. It is not so with the bullet from an assault weapon. The bullet enters at three times the velocity, with three times the energy. It starts tumbling, ripping away flesh. If it goes, for example, to a kidney or to the liver, it pulverizes that organ and comes out the other side of the victim with a hole as large as an orange.

That is the difference between a handgun wound and a wound from a high-velocity assault rifle, whether it is a semiautomatic or whether it is an automatic. It was made automatic, with what we saw in Las Vegas, with the bump stocks. He made a semiautomatic, which was legal to purchase, into an automatic rifle. It is because of that carnage that one has to ask oneself: Would any American citizen want to have those kinds of assault rifles loose on the streets for people who want to use them for dastardly purposes? I think the answer is no.

This Senator grew up on a ranch. I have hunted all of my life. I still hunt with my son, but an AR-15 is not for hunting; it is for killing. It is an understanding of the difference of these weapons that is causing the American people to gradually understand that these kinds of weapons have no place on the streets of America.

One can imagine the SWAT team. Had they been there while the shooter had still been inside and had they entered that school and tried to find the killer and known that what they were going to come up against was an AR-15

instead of a handgun, that would have been a terrible thing. One can imagine, if there had happened to be an armed guard with a pistol and he had gone after the shooter but the shooter had had an AR-15, that would not have been a fair firefight. With a pistol against an AR-15, one can imagine who is going to win that fight.

These are the questions that the American people need to have answered as we go through these discussions about what to do. Thus, when these students all gather in Washington and in 100 cities around this country on March 24—a Saturday—and start marching in untold numbers, they are going to be asking: Isn't enough enough? Haven't we come to the point at which we ought to reexamine that the Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms but if these are the arms we want borne on our streets?

I yield the floor.

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

NOMINATION OF TILMAN SELF

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise out of a great sense of pride to exercise one of my responsibilities in the U.S. Senate to speak on behalf of Tripp Self, a judge from the Georgia courts, who has been nominated to become a judge for the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia. The vote will take place not too long from now, and I encourage every Senator to cast his vote for Judge Self. He is the whole package.

He has a wonderful wife and family and four great children. He worked in the private sector for years and accomplished many things in the private sector. He went to the University of Georgia School of Law and graduated cum laude and summa cum laude from The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina, and went on to have a distinguished private career. He then served as a superior court judge on the Macon Judicial Circuit for the State of Georgia. In that job with the superior court, he did something that I am very close to. He is an entrepreneur because he started the Veterans Treatment Court for the Middle District of Georgia and for that judicial circuit.

The Veterans Treatment Court, as all of you know, is a court that is formed to help veterans who stray from the law or who have difficulties when they come home either because of PTSD or TBI. It helps them with the struggles of battle that they have had and with whatever problems they may have had from representing us on the battlefield. They trip and they fall, and they need somebody to help get them up. We want to make them do the right thing but also help them get themselves brushed off, look forward to careers, and help them get that step forward. We do that with teenagers with what are called CASAs, Court Appointed Special Advocates. We turn people around who otherwise might go to jail—young kids. The Veterans Treatment Court takes those who have

risked paying the ultimate sacrifice—that of their lives for you and for me and for everybody else—who might have fallen off just a little bit. When we get them back into the judicial system, we get them straightened out, and we move them forward so they have better lives and rewarding careers of their own—thanking them for all of the things they have done for us as veterans.

As the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee of the U.S. Senate and as one who recognizes the value of the court system for all of the things it does to administer justice, I am particularly proud to have a judge who has used his entrepreneurial skills to deal with a problem our society has in the legal sense and in the court sense and to see to it that our veterans are getting the help they need and that our communities are getting the representation they need.

I am also a football fan. I know calling football games is tough, just as making judicial decisions is tough. Tripp Self officiates NCAA football in the Southern Conference. Two years ago, he was selected to do the 2017 FCS national championship game, which is a testament to his ability to call balls and strikes on the field.

He is a pretty good shot too. He is a turkey hunter and likes to turkey hunt and likes the outdoors.

Most importantly, he loves the United States of America. He respects and loves the law for what it does. We are a nation of laws and not of men. He does everything in his capacity as an individual and as one on the bench to see to it that our country is a better country and our State is a better State—the State I represent, Georgia.

When each Senator turns to vote in a few minutes on the confirmations of the three judges that will come before us today, when it comes to Judge Tripp Self, of Georgia, may each cast a vote proudly for someone who is a legal entrepreneur for veterans, one who has served with distinction in the State as a private sector practicing attorney and on the bench already, and one who will serve the United States of America very well in the years to come.

I commend him and his family for being willing to take on this responsibility, and I thank the President of the United States for the wisdom to make this appointment.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. 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 question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Scholer nomination?

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and



the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SUL-LIVAN).

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

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 95, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 46 Ex.]

YEAS—95

Alexander	Flake	Nelson
Baldwin	Gardner	Paul
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Perdue
Bennet	Graham	Peters
Blumenthal	Grassley	Portman
Blunt	Harris	Reed
Booker	Hassan	Risch
Boozman	Hatch	Roberts
Brown	Heinrich	Rounds
Burr	Heller	Rubio
Cantwell	Hirono	Sanders
Capito	Hoeven	Sasse
Cardin	Inhofe	Schatz
Carper	Isakson	Schumer
Casey	Johnson	Scott
Cassidy	Jones	Shaheen
Cochran	Kaine	Shelby
Collins	Kennedy	Smith
Coons	King	Stabenow
Corker	Klobuchar	Tester
Cornyn	Lankford	Thune
Cortez Masto	Leahy	Tillis
Cotton	Lee	Toomey
Crapo	Manchin	Udall
Daines	Markey	Van Hollen
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Duckworth	McConnell	Warren
Durbin	Menendez	Whitehouse
Enzi	Merkley	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Wyden
Feinstein	Murphy	Young
Fischer	Murray	

NOT VOTING—5

Cruz	McCain	Sullivan
Heitkamp	Murkowski	

The nomination was confirmed.

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the pending nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Tilman Eugene Self III, of Georgia, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Georgia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Self nomination?

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and

the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SUL-LIVAN).

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

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

The result was announced—yeas 85, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 47 Ex.]

YEAS—85

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

NAYS—11

Blumenthal	Markey	Sanders
Booker	Menendez	Stabenow
Gillibrand	Merkley	Warren
Harris	Peters	

NOT VOTING—4

Cruz	Murkowski
McCain	Sullivan

The nomination was confirmed.

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

The Senator from Tennessee.

RETIREMENT OF THAD COCHRAN

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, late this afternoon, Senator THAD COCHRAN, the senior Senator from Mississippi, announced he will be retiring from the Senate on April 1. He said his health had become an ongoing concern.

I saw a steady stream of Senators visiting with Senator COCHRAN today expressing their best wishes to him and for good reason: Senator COCHRAN is a gentleman, first of all; he is a skilled legislator, second of all. He has earned the respect of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle through his chairmanship of the Senate Appropriations Committee, the one-time chairman of the Senate Republican conference, and back in Mississippi, he was a pioneer in the development of that State's two-party system in the Republican Party.

He and Trent Lott were both elected to Congress in 1972, in the Nixon sweep. Then, THAD COCHRAN became the first

statewide-elected Republican in Mississippi since Reconstruction, in 1978, when he was elected to the U.S. Senate. He has been here ever since.

He is a close friend. I admire him greatly. We will miss him greatly, but I especially admire his service and wanted to say that before I made other remarks.

TARIFFS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, 16 years ago President George W. Bush announced that tariffs would be imposed on steel imports from several countries. The goal was to help protect the domestic steel industry. It was a good goal by a well-intentioned President whom I supported, but it backfired.

Last week President Trump announced that he intends to impose new tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum for the same reasons. It is a good goal by a well-intentioned President, but I am afraid it will backfire, just as it did for President Bush 16 years ago.

Here is the problem: Tariffs are big taxes, and they are big taxes that raise consumer prices. These new tariffs may temporarily save a few jobs in plants that produce steel and aluminum, but they will destroy many more jobs in auto plants that use steel and aluminum.

This is especially bad news for Tennesseans because one-third of our State's manufacturing jobs are auto jobs, with more than 900 plants in 87 of our 95 counties. Anything that threatens to destroy or damage auto jobs is of grave concern to Tennesseans. It will now be cheaper for some Tennessee auto parts suppliers to move outside the United States, buy steel and aluminum there, and then ship finished parts back to this country.

These new tariffs will hurt more than U.S. auto manufacturers. The President indicated this morning that a final decision hasn't been made. I hope that before he makes a final decision, he will take into consideration the choices that companies such as Electrolux are making, which demonstrate that broad tariffs are bad for American workers and will cost Americans jobs, not just auto jobs.

Here is one example of the damage the proposed steel tariff would do in Tennessee to a home appliance manufacturer that uses 100 percent American steel. Immediately after the tariff was announced last week, Electrolux—Europe's largest home appliance manufacturer—announced that it was putting on hold a \$250 million expansion in Springfield, TN, just outside of Nashville. Electrolux has made multiple investments in Tennessee, with plants in Memphis, as well as Springfield. Electrolux employs more than 1,000 Tennesseans.

The company said: "Unfortunately, this decision gives foreign appliance manufacturers a cost advantage that is

hard to compete against.” Note that Electrolux says that it gives foreign manufacturers an advantage. Electrolux buys all of the carbon steel it uses in its Tennessee plants from American steel mills. Let me say that again. Electrolux, which employees 1,000 people in Tennessee making home appliances, buys all of the carbon steel it uses in Tennessee plants from American steel mills. Yet it has put its expansion on hold because it believes the tariff will make it difficult for Tennessee plants to compete with plants overseas. Why? Because the new tariff is expected to cause American steel mills to raise their prices to match the newer, higher price of imported steel. The result of the tariff, therefore, will be higher costs for Electrolux and fewer jobs in Springfield, TN, making home appliances with 100 percent American steel. Instead, there will be more jobs overseas making home appliances with 100 percent foreign steel.

The new U.S. tariffs on imported steel will raise the price of all steel sold in our country, so appliance manufacturers with plants in the United States will have a hard time competing with plants outside of our country.

We should learn the lesson from 2002 when President Bush imposed similar tariffs—again, a good goal, a well-intentioned President, but it backfired. According to one widely cited independent study, the tariffs raised consumer prices and “[m]ore American workers lost their jobs in 2002 to higher steel prices than the total number employed by the U.S. steel industry itself.” President Bush’s tariffs also led to retaliation, as other countries threatened to impose new tariffs on American exports, which would have cost even more U.S. jobs.

On Friday, the Wall Street Journal editorial board reminded readers: “Steel using industries in the U.S. employ some 6.5 million Americans, while steel makers employ about 140,000. Transportation industries, including aircraft and autos, account for about 40% of domestic steel consumption, followed by packaging with 20% and building construction with 15%. All will have to pay higher prices, making them less competitive globally and in the U.S.”

That was the Wall Street Journal.

The backlash to the 2002 tariffs was so strong that President Bush terminated them early.

I want to give President Trump credit for listening. He invited a number of us who disagree with his advisers on trade to the White House. He has listened carefully. So far, we haven’t persuaded him. I hope we still can. I thank him for listening. I hope he will continue to listen.

It is unusual to have a lesson in American history so much like the action he is proposing to take that was not good for the country no matter how well-intentioned the President was or how good an idea it seemed.

Since history can often serve as a guide, I refer my colleagues to two ad-

resses I delivered on the U.S. Senate floor on September 2, 2003, and November 11, 2003, summarizing the disastrous effect President Bush’s proposed steel tariffs had on U.S. jobs.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a copy of the Wall Street Journal’s March 2 editorial on tariffs.

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

[From the Wall Street Journal, Updated March 1, 2018]

TRUMP’S TARIFF FOLLY  
(By the Editorial Board)

Donald Trump made the biggest policy blunder of his Presidency Thursday by announcing that next week he’ll impose tariffs of 25% on imported steel and 10% on aluminum. This tax increase will punish American workers, invite retaliation that will harm U.S. exports, divide his political coalition at home, anger allies abroad, and undermine his tax and regulatory reforms. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 1.7% on the news, as investors absorbed the self-inflicted folly.

Mr. Trump has spent a year trying to lift the economy from its Obama doldrums, with considerable success. Annual GDP growth has averaged 3% in the past nine months if you adjust for temporary factors, and on Tuesday the ISM manufacturing index for February came in at a gaudy 60.8. American factories are humming, and consumer and business confidence are soaring.

Apparently Mr. Trump can’t stand all this winning. His tariffs will benefit a handful of companies, at least for a while, but they will harm many more. “We have with us the biggest steel companies in the United States. They used to be a lot bigger, but they’re going to be a lot bigger again,” Mr. Trump declared in a meeting Thursday at the White House with steel and aluminum executives.

No, they won’t. The immediate impact will be to make the U.S. an island of high-priced steel and aluminum. The U.S. companies will raise their prices to nearly match the tariffs while snatching some market share. The additional profits will flow to executives in higher bonuses and shareholders, at least until the higher prices hurt their steel- and aluminum-using customers. Then U.S. steel and aluminum makers will be hurt as well.

Mr. Trump seems not to understand that steel-using industries in the U.S. employ some 6.5 million Americans, while steel makers employ about 140,000. Transportation industries, including aircraft and autos, account for about 40% of domestic steel consumption, followed by packaging with 20% and building construction with 15%. All will have to pay higher prices, making them less competitive globally and in the U.S.

Instead of importing steel to make goods in America, many companies will simply import the finished product made from cheaper steel or aluminum abroad. Mr. Trump fancies himself the savior of the U.S. auto industry, but he might note that Ford Motor shares fell 3% Thursday and GM’s fell 4%. U.S. Steel gained 5.8%. Mr. Trump has handed a giant gift to foreign car makers, which will now have a cost advantage over Detroit. How do you think that will play in Michigan in 2020? The National Retail Federation called the tariffs a “tax on American families,” who will pay higher prices for canned goods and even beer in aluminum cans. Another name for this is the Trump voter tax.

The economic damage will quickly compound because other countries can and will retaliate against U.S. exports. Not steel, but

against farm goods, Harley-Davidson motorcycles, Cummins engines, John Deere tractors, and much more. Foreign countries are canny enough to know how to impose maximum political pain on Republican Senators and Congressmen in an election year by targeting exports from their states and districts. Has anyone at the White House political shop thought this through?

Then there’s the diplomatic damage, made worse by Mr. Trump’s use of Section 232 to claim a threat to national security. In the process Mr. Trump is declaring a unilateral exception to U.S. trade agreements that other countries won’t forget and will surely emulate.

The national security threat from foreign steel is preposterous because China supplies only 2.2% of U.S. imports and Russia 8.7%. But the tariffs will whack that menace to world peace known as Canada, which supplies 16%. South Korea, which Mr. Trump needs for his strategy against North Korea, supplies 10%, Brazil 13% and Mexico 9%.

Oh, and Canada buys more American steel than any other country, accounting for 50% of U.S. steel exports. Mr. Trump is punishing our most important trading partner in the middle of a NAFTA renegotiation that he claims will result in a much better deal. Instead he is taking a machete to America’s trade credibility. Why should Canada believe a word he says?

Mr. Trump announced his intentions Thursday, so there’s still time to reconsider. GOP Senators Orrin Hatch (Utah) and Ben Sasse (Nebraska) spoke up loudly against the tariffs, but a larger business and labor chorus is required. Mr. Trump is a bona fide protectionist so he won’t be dissuaded by arguments about comparative advantage. But perhaps he will heed the message from the falling stock market, and from the harm he will do to the economy, his voters, and his Presidency.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today as Syria is about to enter its eighth year of conflict. We have witnessed 7 years of displacement and violence, 7 years of war crimes, and 7 years of Bashar al-Assad’s illegitimate grasp on power. To say that it is past time for Assad to go or that it is past time for the conflict to be resolved dramatically underestimates the horrible suffering and destruction the people of Syria have experienced. In these 7 years, almost 500,000 Syrians have been killed and more than 12 million have been displaced from their homes.

This conflict has disproportionately affected children, as all conflicts do. According to Save the Children, inside Syria, 7.5 million children have lived their whole lives knowing nothing but war. Emotional and psychological stress has manifested itself physically; Syrian children now face an increase in heart disease, diabetes, and depression. These children are growing up in refugee camps, with no end in sight. This means the loss of their childhood and

of educational opportunities. I don't exaggerate when I say that because of this war, an entire generation of Syrians will be both displaced and disaffected in an already volatile region. Ignoring these children ensures decades of instability to come.

In Eastern Ghouta this past week, we saw the most recent example of the brutality of the Assad regime, aided and abetted by Russia and Iran. While only just now making headlines, Eastern Ghouta has been held under siege by the Syrian Government since 2013. This neighborhood, which had supposedly been designated as a deescalation zone, has been bombarded by Syrian Government forces armed with Russian weapons. In just a few days, 500 civilians have been killed, and that number is growing.

Years after the international community reached a consensus that Assad had lost his legitimacy as the leader of Syria, he not only remains in power but is more secure than ever. The United States has not only failed to exert moral leadership in the face of Syrian suffering but has also failed to show strategic leadership in the face of a tangible threat to U.S. national security.

I have long called on both the Obama and Trump administrations, warning that U.S. interests were not being represented in Syrian negotiations, but this has never been more clearly illustrated than in November of this past year, November of 2017, when a picture circulated of Presidents Ruhani, Putin, and Erdogan shaking hands in Russia after a round of negotiations to determine a potential resolution of the Syrian conflict.

I have to ask, is it now U.S. policy to let these three dictate policy in the Middle East—Ruhani, Putin, and Erdogan? The United States was not there, nor were our European allies. The United States is failing our own interests by ceding leadership in Syria to Iran and Russia, whose national security interests often directly contradict our own.

What do these bullying regimes want from Syria?

Let's start with Iran. Iran sees Syria as an investment in its political infrastructure and its campaign for regional hegemony. It is their "land bridge" from Tehran to Beirut, a weapons pipeline, a training camp for Hezbollah. It is a practice ground for a future war with Israel.

What about the Russians? The Russian Government, led by Mr. Putin, has made clear that they believe all Syrian territory must return to the Assad regime and to the Assad regime's control before political reforms can be considered. Putin seeks a solution that shows that he is the arbiter of events in the Middle East. Lately, foreign leaders—including Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel, President Ruhani, and King Salman of Saudi Arabia—fly to Moscow instead of Washington. They see a Russia that seeks to write the rules of

international order and an America that sits back, too enmeshed in our own political strife to lead.

This is not the America that I know and that most Americans know. The America I know does not believe that where you are born should dictate where you live or die or if you spend your childhood in a refugee camp. The America I know does not stand by while enemy nations threaten to expand their spheres of influence. The America I know sees the complexity of our own foreign involvements, understanding, for instance, that ISIS cannot be fully defeated without considering the context of the Syrian civil war. The America I know supports its allies, like Israel, that share a chaotic border with a nation at war with itself.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy spoke at the Fort Worth, TX, Chamber of Commerce on the challenges posed by the Soviet regime.

He said:

This country, which desires only to be free, which desires to be secure, which desired to live at peace for 18 years under three different administrations, has borne more than its share of the burden, has stood watch for more than its number of years. I don't think we are fatigued or tired. We would like to live as we once lived. But history will not permit it. . . . The balance of power is still on the side of freedom. We are still the keystone in the arch of freedom, and I think we will continue to do as we have done in our past, our duty.

So said President Kennedy. He spoke to the paradox of our country then and now, what we continue to face. If we are to remain the keystone in the arch of freedom, we cannot become fatigued by the responsibility to fight tyranny.

These are the very issues that should receive public debate as part of the congressional consideration of a new authorization for the use of military force, known by the acronym AUMF. We undermine our own credibility when we continue to send our men and women into conflicts that Congress has not authorized. Secretary Tillerson, our Secretary of State, has indicated that he sees a need for a long-term U.S. military presence in Syria; yet many of us believe that there is no purely military solution to this conflict. Where is the strategy? we ask. I would like to see the administration put forward a plan that encompasses all components of this conflict—military, political, and humanitarian.

When we ask our men and women in uniform to put their lives on the line to protect our homeland and fight terrorism, we need to be willing to back them up by doing our jobs here in Washington. Just consider Pennsylvania. Pennsylvanians have made a substantial sacrifice in the past 17 years of war as 288 of our brave servicemembers have been killed in action in those 17 years and as almost 2,000 have been wounded in action in Afghanistan and Iraq.

We owe it to these men and women to have a robust, bipartisan debate about this strategy and a vote on an AUMF.

We should also vote on legislation to cut off financing for ISIS or any other terrorist organization in the world. I have a bipartisan bill, the Stop Terrorists Operational Resources and Money Act, the so-called STORM Act, with Senator ISAKSON. I have a bill, as well, with Senator RUBIO, the Preventing Destabilization of Iraq and Syria Act, to promote humanitarian aid and sanction the Russian and Iranian actors who are destabilizing this region—all of the components of a comprehensive strategy.

Let's have a serious debate on this critical national security issue. We are not always faced with situations in which our moral obligation and our strategic priorities lead to the same conclusion, but this is one of those rare moments.

May it be said of us years from now, just as President Kennedy said, that we do our duty to continue to be the keystone in the arch of freedom, including helping the Syrian people, especially her children, be free of Assad's brutality and bombing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination, Executive Calendar No. 397.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jeffrey Gerrish, of Maryland, to be a Deputy United States Trade Representative (Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Industrial Competitiveness), with the rank of Ambassador.

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 Gerrish nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

##### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume 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.

#### NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY'S FOUNDERS DAY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it is my privilege to highlight the 50th anniversary of the founding of Northern Kentucky University, NKU. I am proud to join with NKU's more than 14,000 students, its faculty and staff, and its supporters in marking the history of the institution.

As northern Kentucky was previously the only region in the State without a traditional public university, many students lacked the opportunity to attend a local 4-year institution of higher education that students in other regions of Kentucky enjoyed. In response, a bipartisan group of State legislators from the region worked with Kentucky Governor Louie B. Nunn to establish a new school in 1968. Originally named Northern Kentucky State College, the school proved to be an attractive option for local students from the region. Less than a decade later, as the campus continued to expand its programs and services to accommodate a growing student population, the school became a university, changing its name to Northern Kentucky University, NKU. Since that time, NKU has continued to thrive, adding more undergraduate, graduate, and even doctoral programs, which have attracted a broader base of students to the university. These advancements, coupled with the region's population growth and economic development, have been an immense benefit to Northern Kentucky.

NKU has also expanded athletic opportunities for its students and has built a number of strong teams. Having dominated NCAA Division II play with two women's basketball national championships and one men's soccer national championship, the Norse recently transitioned into NCAA Division I. With this new reclassification, the Norse teams have continued to excel. Winning the Horizon League tournament last year, the men's basketball team earned their first trip to the NCAA Division I tournament. This year, the team's hard work earned their title as the Horizon League's regular season champions. In addition, the Norse have many other impressive teams and dedicated fans.

On its golden anniversary, NKU has so much to be proud of. Under the leadership of Interim President Gerard St. Amand, the school continues to grow in both size and prominence. It has matured into a comprehensive university that delivers innovative, student-centered education and engages in impactful scholarly and creative endeavors, all of which empower its graduates to have fulfilling careers and meaningful lives.

With successful alumni who have entered a wide range of careers, from government leaders to entrepreneurs, to

artists, and to coaches, NKU has helped more than 60,000 students achieve their dreams. For a half century, NKU has had a tremendous impact on the economic, civic, and social vitality of the region, and all Kentuckians are benefiting from having such an outstanding higher education institution in our Commonwealth. I would like to congratulate the entire Northern Kentucky University community on reaching this Founders Day milestone, and I urge my Senate colleagues to join me in recognizing its accomplishments.

#### ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Record the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY  
COOPERATION AGENCY,  
Arlington, VA.

Hon. BOB CORKER,  
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,  
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 17-79, concerning the Navy's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of Japan for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$45 million. After this letter is delivered to your office, we plan to issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale.

Sincerely,

GREGORY M. KAUSNER,  
(For Charles W. Hooper, Lieutenant  
General, USA, Director).

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 17-79

*Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended*

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of Japan.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:  
Major Defense Equipment\* \$40 million.  
Other \$5 million.  
Total \$45 million.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase:

Major Defense Equipment (MDE):  
Twenty-four (24) MK 15 Phalanx Close-in Weapon System (CIWS) Block IB Baseline 1 to MK 15 Phalanx Block IB Baseline 2 Conversion Kits.

Non-MDE: Also included is support equipment, spare parts, publications, software and associated support, and logistical support services, and other related elements of logistical and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Navy (JA-P-NBE).

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: None.

(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc., Paid, Offered, or Agreed to be Paid: None.

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: See Attached Annex.

(viii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: March 2, 2018.

\*As defined in Section 47(6) of the Arms Export Control Act.

#### POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Japan—MK 15 Phalanx Close-in Weapon System (CIWS) Block IB Baseline 2 Conversion Kits

The Government of Japan has requested to buy twenty-four (24) MK 15 Phalanx Close-in Weapon System (CIWS) Block IB Baseline 1 to MK 15 Phalanx Block IB Baseline 2 conversion kits. Also included is support equipment, spare parts, publications, software and associated support, and logistical support services, and other related elements of logistical and program support. The estimated total case value is \$45 million.

This proposed sale will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by improving the security of a major ally that has been, and continues to be, a force for political stability and economic progress in the Asia-Pacific region.

The proposed sale will improve Japan's capability in current and future defensive efforts. Japan will use the enhanced capability as a deterrent to regional threats and to strengthen homeland defense.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor will be Raytheon Missile Systems, Tucson, AZ. There are no known offset agreements proposed in connection with this potential sale.

Implementation of this proposed sale will not require the permanent assignment of additional U.S. Government or contractor representatives in Japan.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 17-79

*Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act*

Annex Item No. vii

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology:

1. The CIWS Block IB Baseline 2 represents an increase in threat acquisition and firepower accuracy over previous Block 1 Baseline configurations. The Baseline 2 variant includes a radar improvement upgrade and an electro-optical sensor to improve weapon system performance against low-observable, sea-skimming threats, and provides improved capability to concentrate hard-kill ordnance in a tighter pattern on the threat. The CIWS mount and spare hardware are UNCLASSIFIED. The radar improvement/upgrade is the most sensitive portion of the Baseline 2 configuration.

2. The CIWS Block IB Baseline 2 systems and upgrade kits will result in the transfer of a highly accurate close-in engagement technology and ship self-defense capability. The equipment, hardware, and the majority of documentation are UNCLASSIFIED. The embedded software and operational performance are classified CONFIDENTIAL. The seeker/electro-optical control section and the target detector are UNCLASSIFIED, but

contain a sensitive state-of-the-art technology. Technical Manuals used to support the operation and provisioning of organizational-level maintenance are CONFIDENTIAL. The technical and operational data identified above is classified to protect vulnerabilities, design and performance parameters, and similar critical information.

3. If a technologically advanced adversary were to obtain knowledge of specific hardware, the information could be used to develop countermeasures which might reduce weapons system effectiveness or be used in the development of a system with similar or advanced capabilities.

4. A determination has been made that Japan can provide substantially the same degree of protection for sensitive technology being released as the U.S. Government. This proposed sustainment program is necessary to the furtherance of the U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives outlined in the policy justification.

5. All defense articles and services listed in this transmittal are authorized for release and export to the Government of Japan.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO CAITLIN "KATIE" BRAND AND RECOGNIZING UCWIP

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the Uni-Capitol Washington Internship Programme, UCWIP. Our Nation has benefited from the service of outstanding Australian college students who participate in internships throughout the U.S. Congress through this program.

The program provides students with the opportunity to obtain considerable experience through their congressional internships, while also making available other educational experiences throughout their time in the U.S. Uni-Capitol Washington Programme interns have helped me serve Idaho constituents, and I am grateful for their efforts and dedication.

Caitlin "Katie" Brand, a UCWIP participant, joined my staff as an intern this semester. Katie is studying a double bachelor of commerce, accounting, and law with a diploma of languages, Mandarin, at Monash University. Upon completion of her degree, Katie intends to pursue a career in either the international relations, finance, or banking fields. Katie has been a pleasure to have on my staff and quickly adapted to her role and responsibilities in the office. Her eager and intelligent demeanor have allowed Katie to put forth her best work in helping to advance crucial work for Idahoans. I commend the level of professionalism Katie exhibits in every office interaction. She has shared with us some of the political and cultural differences between the U.S. and Australia, and it has been a great learning experience for both Katie and the staff.

"Being part of the UCWIP program and working in Senator Mike Crapo's office was an invaluable experience," Katie has said about her experiences in Washington. "The opportunity has afforded me unparalleled insight into the world's foremost legislative body and

enriched my professional development, including opportunities beyond what I imagined, such as attending the State of the Union as the Senator's guest. I want to wholeheartedly thank Senator Crapo and the staff in Senator Crapo's office who have made my internship so enjoyable and educational."

Eric Federer, UCWIP's director and founder, has successfully focused his Capitol Hill and Australia experiences to provide this valuable educational exchange opportunity that benefits Australian students and congressional offices. His dedication to advancing this learning experience is remarkable.

I have been honored to have worked with the Uni-Capitol Washington Internship Programme for several years. The program is shaping young leaders who are helping to deepen understanding between our two nations while providing outstanding constituent support. I commend Katie Brand, Eric Federer, and the other Uni-Capitol Washington Internship Programme participants and interns for their achievements and wish them continued success.●

##### TRIBUTE TO IRMA CLOUGH

• Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, today I would like to recognize the very special occasion of the 100th birthday of Mrs. Irma Clough, which occurred on February 18, 2018. Born in 1918, Irma has lived in Bath, NH, for the majority of her life.

Irma's friends describe her as an independent spirit with a great sense of humor. She loves wildlife, playing cards and dominos, and keeping up with basketball games. As a young woman, she cleaned people's houses to help support her family. While working as a cook at the Village Bath School, Irma was well known for her baking skills.

Irma is a dedicated member of the Bath Congregational Church where she has sung in the choir and served as the church treasurer. Twenty-three years ago, Irma started the annual Fall Foliage Festival in her town. She has also been a member of Pine Grove Grange for over 85 years and continues to serve as their treasurer.

Irma and her husband, Edwin Clough, who passed away in 1993, were married for 45 years. Together they raised three children, and now, Irma has 8 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

I hope everyone joins me in wishing an accomplished and well-loved Granite Stater, Irma Clough, a very happy 100th birthday.●

##### TRIBUTE TO KATERI CALLAHAN

• Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I want to recognize the leadership of Kateri Callahan, who has served as president of the Alliance to Save Energy since 2004. As the honorary chair of the alliance, I have been a firsthand witness to many of Kateri's most recent accomplishments. Before Kateri

starts the next chapter of her career, I want take this opportunity to look back upon her 14 years with the alliance and thank her for her contributions to Federal energy-efficiency policy.

In 1977, Senators Charles Percy and Hubert Humphrey—a Republican from Illinois and a Democrat from Minnesota—founded the alliance as the leading energy-efficiency coalition of businesses, governments, environmental groups, and consumer advocates. The goal of the Alliance from the start has been simple: "Use less and do more." In the wake of the oil embargoes and energy shortages of the 1970s, that message resonated loud and clear, and it still does.

Energy efficiency saves money, improves national security, reduces pollution, encourages innovation, boosts U.S. competitiveness, and creates jobs. Without the economywide improvements in energy efficiency made since 1973, it is estimated that today's economy would require 60 percent more energy than we consume now. In fact, savings from energy-efficiency improvements over the last 40 years have reduced our national energy bill by an estimated \$800 billion, all while growing and expanding our economy.

Since its establishment, the alliance has taken great care to cultivate and maintain bipartisan support for policies supporting energy efficiency. While doing so, the organization has been led by a distinguished groups of energy efficiency thought-leaders and advocates like Kateri.

For my colleagues who have not met Kateri, you need to know she is persistent and tenacious. Once she gets ahold of something, believe me she never lets go and sees it through to the end. I am thankful for Kateri's leadership, and on behalf of my House and Senate colleagues who are also part of the alliance, I am thankful for the coalition's support for my proposals over the years.

Highlights abound during Kateri's tenure at the alliance. She was a key negotiator on many of the most impactful energy-efficiency provisions of the 2005 and 2007 energy bills that passed Congress with strong bipartisan support and were signed into law by President George W. Bush. She helped ensure that the 2009 stimulus package provided significant investments in energy efficiency and encouraged states to adopt updated building energy codes. In 2015, she stood with me and my colleagues, Senator ROB PORTMAN and Representatives DAVID MCKINLEY and PETER WELCH, as President Barack Obama signed our bipartisan and bicameral bill, the Energy Efficiency Improvement Act, which was the first significant energy-efficiency legislation to pass Congress in nearly a decade.

In addition to her work in Washington, Kateri has spurred initiatives to connect directly with energy consumers and educate the public about

the economic and environmental opportunities of energy efficiency. She produced a series of award-winning consumer education campaigns, including the Power is in Your Hands, Energy Hog, DriveSmarter, LUMEN, and Six Degrees of Energy Efficiency. She also led the establishment of the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance to ensure that American families and businesses in the southeastern States have the knowledge, resources, and opportunities to optimize energy use.

The alliance's reach does not stop at our borders. Under the leadership of Kateri, the alliance created the European Alliance to Save Energy and established EE Global, the world's premier gathering of energy-efficiency leaders to discuss new ideas and chart new paths to do more by using less.

Serving 14 years as president of an organization like the alliance is its own commendable accomplishment, but Kateri has had a more profound and positive impact on Federal energy-efficiency policy than can be counted just in years. I congratulate Kateri and express sincere thanks for her support over the years. I wish her the best in her future pursuits and good health and good luck.

Thank you.●

#### MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:04 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to section 30422(b)(3) of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-123), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker and Majority Leader of the Senate jointly appoints the following Senator to the Joint Select Committee on Solvency of Multiemployer Pension Plans as co-chair: Mr. HATCH of Utah.

The message further announced that pursuant to section 30442(b)(3) of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-123), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker and Majority Leader of the Senate jointly appoints the following Member to the Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform as co-chair: Mr. WOMACK of Arkansas.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 30442(b)(3) of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-123) the Minority Leader of the House and Minority Leader of the Senate jointly appoints the following Member of the House of Representatives to the Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform as co-chair: Mrs. NITA LOWEY of New York.

The message further announced that pursuant to section 703 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 903), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker re-appoints the following individual on the part of the House of Representatives to the Social Security Advisory Board for a term of 6 years:

Ms. Nancy Altman of Bethesda, Maryland.

#### 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. SCOTT (for himself and Mr. JONES):

S. 2490. A bill to amend the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act of 1974 to modify requirements related to mortgage disclosures; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. PAUL:

S. 2491. A bill to permit voluntary economic activity; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. TOOMEY (for himself, Mr. COONS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. NELSON, Mr. CORNYN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. GRAHAM, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Ms. COLLINS, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 2492. A bill to provide for the reporting to State and local law enforcement authorities of cases in which the national instant criminal background check system indicates that a firearm has been sought to be acquired by a prohibited person, so that authorities may pursue criminal charges under State law, and to ensure that the Department of Justice reports to Congress on prosecutions secured against prohibited persons who attempt to acquire a firearm; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MANCHIN:

S. 2493. A bill to clarify the congressional intent behind the requirements relating to immediate suspension orders and corrective action plans under the Controlled Substances Act that were added by the Ensuring Patient Access and Effective Drug Enforcement Act of 2016; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BALDWIN (for herself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. SMITH, Mr. Kaine, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. WARREN, Ms. HARRIS, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. HASSAN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. BROWN):

S. 2494. A bill to provide standards for short-term limited duration health insurance policies; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. NELSON, Mr. CORNYN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. HELLER, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. CASSIDY, Ms. BALDWIN, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. BROWN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. UDALL, Mrs. ERNST, Mr. JONES, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. KING, Mr. YOUNG, Ms. SMITH, Mr. DAINES, and Mr. PETERS):

S. 2495. A bill to reauthorize the grant program for school security in the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. ENZI:

S. 2496. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to establish Small Business Health Accounts; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mr. COONS):

S. 2497. A bill to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the Arms Export Control Act to make improvements to certain defense and security assistance provisions and to authorize the appropriations of funds

to Israel, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. SCOTT (for himself, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mr. CASSIDY, and Mr. PETERS):

S. 2498. A bill to reduce identity fraud; to the Committee on Finance.

#### ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 183

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the names of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) and the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 183, a bill to allow for expedited approval of generic prescription drugs and temporary importation of prescription drugs in the case of non-competitive drug markets and drug shortages.

S. 224

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 224, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit taking minors across State lines in circumvention of laws requiring the involvement of parents in abortion decisions.

S. 266

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) 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.

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) was added as a cosponsor of S. 266, *supra*.

S. 292

At the request of Mr. REED, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 292, a bill to maximize discovery, and accelerate development and availability, of promising childhood cancer treatments, and for other purposes.

S. 363

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 363, a bill to revise the authorized route of the North Country National Scenic Trail in northeastern Minnesota and to extend the trail into Vermont to connect with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and for other purposes.

S. 445

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCHE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 445, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure more timely access to home health services for Medicare beneficiaries under the Medicare program.

S. 591

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 591, a bill to expand eligibility for the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers of



the Department of Veterans Affairs, to expand benefits available to participants under such program, to enhance special compensation for members of the uniformed services who require assistance in everyday life, and for other purposes.

S. 720

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 720, a bill to amend the Export Administration Act of 1979 to include in the prohibitions on boycotts against allies of the United States boycotts fostered by international governmental organizations against Israel and to direct the Export-Import Bank of the United States to oppose boycotts against Israel, and for other purposes.

S. 898

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 898, a bill to provide incentives to physicians to practice in rural and medically underserved communities, and for other purposes.

S. 1539

At the request of Mrs. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1539, a bill to protect victims of stalking from gun violence.

S. 1685

At the request of Mr. SCOTT, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1685, a bill to require Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to establish procedures for considering certain credit scores in making a determination whether to purchase a residential mortgage, and for other purposes.

S. 1746

At the request of Mr. LEE, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) were added as cosponsors of S. 1746, a bill to require the Congressional Budget Office to make publicly available the fiscal and mathematical models, data, and other details of computations used in cost analysis and scoring.

S. 1945

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1945, a bill to regulate large capacity ammunition feeding devices.

S. 2038

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2038, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for a presumption of herbicide exposure for certain veterans who served in Korea, and for other purposes.

S. 2076

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Maryland

(Mr. VAN HOLLEN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) were added as cosponsors of S. 2076, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the expansion of activities related to Alzheimer's disease, cognitive decline, and brain health under the Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program, and for other purposes.

S. 2101

At the request of Mr. DONNELLY, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. JONES) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2101, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the crew of the USS *Indianapolis*, in recognition of their perseverance, bravery, and service to the United States.

S. 2208

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2208, a bill to provide for the issuance of an Alzheimer's Disease Research Semipostal Stamp.

S. 2295

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2295, a bill to increase the rates of pay under the General Schedule and other statutory pay systems and for prevailing rate employees by 3.0 percent, and for other purposes.

S. 2319

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2319, a bill to empower States to manage the development and production of oil and gas on available Federal land, and for other purposes.

S. 2324

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2324, a bill to amend the Investment Company Act of 1940 to change certain requirements relating to the capital structure of business development companies, to direct the Securities and Exchange Commission to revise certain rules relating to business development companies, and for other purposes.

S. 2335

At the request of Mr. ROUNDS, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2335, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to issue permits for recreation services on lands managed by Federal agencies, and for other purposes.

S. 2374

At the request of Mr. CARPER, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2374, a bill to amend the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Improvement Act of 2012, including making changes to the Do Not

Pay Initiative, for improved detection, prevention, and recovery of improper payments to deceased individuals, and for other purposes.

S. 2383

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2383, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to improve law enforcement access to data stored across borders, and for other purposes.

S. 2393

At the request of Mr. COONS, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2393, a bill to amend title 17, United States Code, to provide Federal protection to the digital audio transmission of a sound recording fixed before February 15, 1972, and for other purposes.

S. 2416

At the request of Mr. WICKER, the names of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) and the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) were added as cosponsors of S. 2416, a bill to amend titles 5, 10, and 37, United States Code, to ensure that an order to serve on active duty under section 12304b of title 10, United States Code, is treated the same as other orders to serve on active duty for determining the eligibility of members of the uniformed services for certain benefits.

S. 2421

At the request of Mrs. FISCHER, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2421, a bill to amend the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 to provide an exemption from certain notice requirements and penalties for releases of hazardous substances from animal waste at farms.

S. 2427

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the names of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) were added as cosponsors of S. 2427, a bill to establish a task force to identify countervailable subsidies and dumping.

S. 2456

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2456, a bill to reauthorize and expand the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016.

S. 2457

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2457, a bill to provide a work opportunity tax credit for military spouses and to provide for flexible spending arrangements for childcare services for military families.

S. 2458

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr.

WARNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2458, a bill to authorize the Attorney General to deny the transfer of firearms and explosives and Federal firearms and explosives licenses and permits to known or suspected terrorists.

S. 2478

At the request of Mrs. McCASKILL, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2478, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to deny the deduction for advertising and promotional expenses for prescription drugs.

S. RES. 377

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 377, a resolution recognizing the importance of paying tribute to those individuals who have faithfully served and retired from the Armed Forces of the United States, designating April 18, 2018, as "Military Retiree Appreciation Day", and encouraging the people of the United States to honor the past and continued service of military retirees to their local communities and the United States.

#### STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. HATCH (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. NELSON, Mr. CORNYN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. HELLER, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. CASSIDY, Ms. BALDWIN, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. BROWN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. UDALL, Mrs. ERNST, Mr. JONES, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. KING, Mr. YOUNG, Ms. SMITH, Mr. DAINES, and Mr. PETERS):

S. 2495. A bill to reauthorize the grant program for school security in the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, 1 week ago today I stood here and urged my colleagues on both the left and the right to lay aside their differences and work together to prevent future tragedies like that in Parkland, FL.

It has been nearly 3 weeks since the murder of 17 students and staff at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. While time will continue to march on, our resolve to do something about school violence must grow only stronger.

Over the past 3 weeks my colleagues have put forth a number of legislative proposals. Some are recycled versions of earlier proposals, while others propose creative new ideas. Some enjoy broad bipartisan support, while others have not been widely embraced. We have seen much discussion and debate but little legislative progress. To break the impasse, we must unite on the issues where we agree.

Let today be the day that we come together to take a meaningful step to-

ward legislation that has the potential to prevent school gun violence, save lives, and restore the sense of peace and security that all children should enjoy when they walk through the doors of their respective schools.

Today I come together with my partners on both sides of the aisle to introduce the Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing School Violence Act, or STOP School Violence Act. As I outlined on the Senate floor last week, the bill will make Department of Justice grants available to fund four initiatives. Last week I outlined those four initiatives, and today I would like to describe them in even greater detail.

First, the bill will provide grants to be used for evidence-based training to prevent student violence against others and self, including training for local law enforcement officers, school personnel, and students.

One kind of training this bill would fund could prevent many incidents of school violence. Over the last 25 years, research has revealed that in 7 out of 10 acts of gun violence, a friend or someone else was told that an act of violence would be committed before it happened. In one study, it was reported that in four out of five school shootings, the attacker had told people of his plans ahead of time.

We must ensure that everyone in the school ecosystem is educated to recognize the signs of a potential threat and likewise—students, teachers, and administrators—take action and follow up when they see warning signs. By building a culture in which students and teachers understand the importance of reporting possible threats of violence, this bill will save lives and help keep our communities safe.

Second, the bill will fund evidence-based technology and equipment to improve school security and prevent school violence.

After the shooting at Columbine High School nearly 19 years ago, I authored legislation that made Department of Justice grant funds available for metal detectors, locks, lighting, and other deterrent measures. The Secure Our Schools Program, which ran from 2002 through 2011, was the only Federal school safety program that exclusively provided direct funding for the purchase and implementation of security technologies to improve school safety. The legislation I am introducing today will reauthorize and build on that program to provide funding for proven school security infrastructure improvements consistent with schools' individualized needs and industry best practices. While we certainly don't need to turn our schools into fortresses, we must do more to protect our children from harm.

Third, the bill will provide funding for the development and operation of evidence-based school threat assessment and crisis intervention teams, which may include evidence-based training for school officials in responding to mental health crises. These mul-

tidisciplinary teams—based on existing staff of school personnel, administrators, law enforcement, and mental health professionals—can implement proven, evidence-based approaches like the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines. These guidelines, which have been documented to be effective in field tests and controlled studies, provide schools with a safe, structured, and efficient way to respond to student threats of violence. Used at thousands of schools across the country, these are the types of proactive, preventive solutions that should be available for all schools.

Fourth, the bill will authorize funding for continued coordination with local law enforcement.

These four initiatives do not operate in isolation but together are a comprehensive approach to improving school security and reducing student violence. Training students and teachers to identify and report warning signs is critical to stopping acts of school violence before they happen.

As we saw in Parkland, having folks identify warning signs is not enough. There must be a process for acting on this information when it is brought to the attention of school administrators or law enforcement officials. The school threat assessment and crisis intervention teams that could be funded through this bill will ensure that schools have an effective procedure for evaluating and responding to potential threats of school violence.

Unfortunately, no amount of prevention will ever be able to stop every act of school violence before it happens. For those hopefully rare instances where we cannot intervene ahead of time, this bill ensures that funding is available to assist schools with commonsense security infrastructure improvements to harden schools and make it more difficult for attackers to succeed. Through each step of this process, local law enforcement has an important role to play in partnering with school personnel to prevent and respond to incidents of school violence.

States are already taking the lead in these areas to ensure that our schools are safe and secure. Last week I highlighted the Safe Utah smartphone app, a statewide service that provides real-time crisis intervention to youth through texting and a confidential tip program. Since the app was unveiled in 2016, 86 planned school attacks have been stopped. Utah and other States across the country are rolling out proven solutions that prevent and reduce student violence.

We must respect the leading role of the States in this space, and we must do what we can to ensure that proven, evidence-based solutions are available to protect all students nationwide. The STOP School Violence Act will complement and magnify those efforts at the State and local level. With a requirement that States and localities contribute to the cost of these programs, my bill will authorize \$75 million in fiscal year 2018 and \$100 million

each year for the following 10 years. In total, that is more than \$1 billion to secure our schools and train our students, teachers, and law enforcement.

Many of my colleagues have called for reforms and restrictions related to firearms—something this bill does not address. Those are important discussions, and I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on these and other issues. In the meantime, we need to work with what we have, and what we have in the STOP School Violence Act is good, commonsense legislation that can save hundreds of lives. I will not pretend that my bill is a catch-all solution to the problem of school violence. It is not, but it is a start. Indeed, this bipartisan proposal is the catalyst to a critical conversation that will take place in the weeks and months to come.

For far too long, we have allowed politics to get in the way of real reform. For far too long, we have been holed up in our partisan foxholes, ducking the difficult issues of the day in hopes that the problem of school violence would solve itself. For far too long, we have clung to our rhetorical weapons, but now is the time to lay those weapons aside. Now is the time to reconcile our differences for the good of our Nation and for the good of our children. As I said last week, now is not the time for argument but for action.

Rather than letting the perfect be the enemy of the good, I implore my friends on both sides of the aisle to come together for the safety of our children. Rather than resorting to recycled talking points, I ask my colleagues to heed minority leader SCHUMER's call to "pass real legislation that makes a difference." I thought that was a good statement.

Mr. President, I wish to emphasize the singularity of the opportunity we have in front of us. My bill represents a respite from the anger and acrimony that far too often pervade our politics. It is a symbol of the great good we can accomplish when we come together in common cause. Already, dozens of my colleagues from both the left and the right have signed on to support this bill. The STOP Act is just the start we need to prevent violence in our schools, so let's come together to get this done, and I hope we can.

#### ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 2018

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Tuesday, March 6; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed. I further ask that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2155 with the time until

the cloture vote equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; further, that following disposition of the Doughty nomination, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2155; finally, that the Senate recess from 12:30 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. and that all time during recess, adjournment, morning business, leader remarks, and the Doughty confirmation vote count postcloture on the motion to proceed to S. 2155.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

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, following the remarks of Senator CASEY.

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

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

#### RUSSIA INVESTIGATION BY SPECIAL COUNSEL MUELLER

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I restate my support for the investigations by Robert Mueller into Russia's election interference, as well as to condemn the partisan attacks on the independent investigation being led by Robert Mueller, who has been an honorable public servant over many decades.

In 2016, our Nation came under attack by a hostile foreign power. Everyone knows that now. Our election process—the bedrock of our system of government—was targeted by Russian agents. They used a variety of measures to pursue their goals. The intelligence community's unclassified report concluded:

We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election. Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency. We further assess Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump.

That is from the unclassified report of our intelligence community.

These brazen and illegal actions have already resulted in the indictments of 13 Russian individuals and three Russian companies as part of Special Counsel Mueller's investigation.

Russia may not have used traditional military force against us, but the actions they took present just as serious a threat to our national security. Make no mistake, when a foreign adversary targets an American election, it has targeted America, itself. Yet the President, whose own campaign is being examined as part of the Russia investigation, has refused to enforce sanctions against Russia. He has refused to fight back against Putin and his regime, despite there being clear evidence that

they attacked us. The President's failure to take action against Russia underscores the urgent need for Special Counsel Mueller's independent investigation to continue unfettered.

In this investigation, Mr. Mueller has already amassed enough evidence to have a grand jury indict Russian operatives and high-ranking members of the Trump campaign, including former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort and deputy campaign manager Rick Gates. Other Trump advisers, like Mr. Papadopoulos and Michael Flynn, have pled guilty to Federal crimes.

Unfortunately, as this evidence has come forward, unwarranted, dangerous, and partisan attacks on Mr. Mueller's investigation and on Mr. Mueller, himself, have accelerated; yet a brief glance at Mr. Mueller's lifetime of service reflects his commitment to serving the American people with honor, integrity, and courage that, I think, is unmatched by anyone I know in Washington. Here are a couple of examples.

As a young man, Mr. Mueller served with distinction in the Vietnam war and was awarded a Bronze Star, two Navy Commendation Medals, the Purple Heart, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry for his leadership and exemplary service.

Mr. Mueller received the Bronze Star for his "heroic achievement" after leading his fellow marines through an 8-hour battle, where, under enemy fire, "Second Lieutenant Mueller fearlessly moved from one position to another, directing the accurate counterfire of his men and shouting words of encouragement to them. . . . [H]e then skillfully supervised the evacuation of casualties from the hazardous fire area." After that battle, he was promoted to first lieutenant.

Just 4 months later, he sustained a bullet wound when he responded to an ambush by enemy forces on marines who were in his command. For his heroic response, Mr. Mueller received the Navy Commendation Medal with a citation praising him for rushing to save his fellow marines while "completely disregarding his own safety."

I will give a recitation of some of the record that Special Counsel Mueller developed long before he was named to this position. I was going through his actions as a marine in combat, and I have a few more parts of his record to review.

Mr. Mueller not only fought courageously on the battlefield, but upon returning home earned his law degree. He continued serving his country throughout his legal career.

After serving in U.S. attorney's offices in both Boston and San Francisco for over a decade, he later served at the Justice Department leading the Criminal Division of the Justice Department under President George H.W. Bush. There he oversaw cases ranging from the prosecution of the Panamanian dictator, Manuel Noriega, to the Lockerbie bombing.

In 1995, Mr. Mueller left a high-paying position in the private sector to join the DC U.S. attorney's office—in this case, the Homicide Division—working to hold violent offenders accountable for their crimes.

Three years later, he became a U.S. attorney himself, serving again in San Francisco and earning 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, President George W. Bush, to be the Director of the FBI. He was then confirmed unanimously by this body. His tenure at the FBI included leading the response to the September 11 attacks, spearheading the Bureau's efforts to combat cyber crime, which has been widely praised. In fact, in 2011, when his 10-year term was scheduled to end, we in the Senate voted 100 to 0 to extend his term as FBI Director through 2013, another 10 years.

Though our political system has become more polarized, each time Mr. Mueller has been named or nominated for a new position, he has received unqualified praise from people across the political spectrum and rightly so.

With Mr. Mueller's record as a war hero, a dedicated public servant, and an expert in law enforcement, it is hard to imagine anyone better suited to lead the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election. There is no one in Washington, DC, or, frankly, in all of America better prepared to do this job.

Serious congressional oversight of executive branch operations is always

appropriate. However, the reckless partisan attacks on Mr. Mueller's investigation and on Mr. Mueller himself are not the same as congressional oversight. Such attacks have made us less safe as a nation. The political smears like those we have seen undermine our rule of law and strike at the heart of our democracy. They are a disservice to the brave men and women in law enforcement who put their lives on the line to keep all of us safe.

As Members of the U.S. Congress, we have a duty to uphold the rule of law and the principles of fairness and independence that American democracy is built upon.

I call on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to defend the integrity of Mr. Mueller's investigation and reject the politically motivated attempts to discredit the investigation and its underlying conclusions. I call on the House and Senate majority to give us a vote on legislation to protect Special Counsel Mueller's independence and ensure that he can continue his investigation free from interference.

To ensure the integrity of our elections and our democracy, we must make sure we never allow a hostile foreign power to interfere in our electoral process again, and to do that we must allow the special counsel to get to the bottom of what Russia did in 2016 and whether it was aided by American individuals. That is what the whole investigation is about—those two parts.

History, of course, will be our judge. We will be judged about how we handled this crisis. We know that in 1787, when the Constitutional Convention

had just adjourned, Benjamin Franklin was asked what kind of government the Convention had chosen for our young nation. He responded that the Convention has given us “[a] Republic, if you can keep it.”

Democratic principles are only as strong as those elected to uphold them. I hope my colleagues will stand together and stand strong to preserve the rule of law and the institutions of this Republic we have been given, and we must “keep it,” as Franklin said.

I yield the floor.

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#### ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:17 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, March 6, 2018, at 10 a.m.

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#### CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate March 5, 2018:

##### EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

JEFFREY GERRISH, OF MARYLAND, TO BE A DEPUTY UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE (ASIA, EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST, AND INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVENESS), WITH THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR.

##### THE JUDICIARY

KAREN GREN SCHOLER, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS.

TILMAN EUGENE SELF III, OF GEORGIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF GEORGIA.