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Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us today. You are a God of might and power, and our times are in Your hands. Forgive us for sometimes forgetting to trust Your prevailing providence, as You increase our faith through the power of Your Holy Word.

Lord, thank You for our lawmakers. Remind them that they are appointed by You and are, therefore, accountable to You for their work. May they not forget that they are servants of Your Kingdom as You motivate them to be faithful in what they think, say, and do. Provide them with Your wisdom, empowering them to fulfill Your purposes for their lives.

We pray in Your strong 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. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

SPEAKER RYAN'S RETIREMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning, Speaker RYAN announced to his colleagues that he will be departing the House at the conclusion of the 115th Congress.

Two and a half years ago, PAUL RYAN was drafted by his colleagues to lead

the House through a new era. Like a true leader, PAUL stepped up to the plate. He answered his colleagues' call with exactly the earnest, selfless, and focused approach that has defined his entire career in Congress. The results have been beyond impressive.

Capping off a remarkable 20-year career in Congress, PAUL's speakership has yielded one significant accomplishment after another for his conference, his constituents in Wisconsin's First Congressional District, as well as the American people.

True to his career-long reputation as a champion for pro-growth economics, PAUL helped lead the way on last year's once-in-a-generation rewrite of the Nation's Tax Code. Thanks in large part to his personal passion and expertise, reform became a reality, and our economy is charting a new course toward greater prosperity and greater opportunity.

On its own, this generational accomplishment would secure the Speaker's legacy as a transformational conservative leader, but, of course, it is far from the only fruit of his speakership. His leadership was vital to securing everything from the largest year-on-year increase in defense funding in 15 years to the remaking of the way we treat and find cures for rare diseases. What is more, PAUL has paired that ambitious agenda with infectious good cheer and an unflagging commitment to serve all Americans. Amidst all the stresses and pressures of leadership, PAUL's optimism and energy never waned.

It has been a sincere pleasure and a real inspiration to work alongside this humble servant and happy warrior. I am glad we can count on his continued leadership through the rest of this year because our work together is far from finished. I look forward to collaborating closely these next months to implement more of the inclusive, pro-growth, pro-opportunity agenda the American people are counting on us to keep advancing.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on another matter, yesterday the Senate confirmed the first of six nominees slated for consideration this week, Claria Horn Boom to serve as district judge for the Eastern and Western Districts of Kentucky. She was confirmed 96 to 1. There was just one Senator in opposition.

This is the kind of uncontroversial nomination the Senate could typically dispatch by a voice vote, but not these days. Over and over again, we have had to file cloture and exhaust floor time on amply qualified nominees who then soar through their confirmation votes by lopsided margins.

Since President Trump took office, the Senate has had to hold 82—82—cloture votes on judicial and executive nominations. In the first 2 years of President Obama's administration, there were only 12 such cloture votes—12 for President Obama, 4 for George W. Bush, 8 for President Clinton, and already, just a few months into President Trump's second year, there have been 82. The numbers speak for themselves.

Today we will have the opportunity to confirm yet another qualified nominee for a critical post. John Ring's nomination to serve on the National Labor Relations Board is an important next step to continue cleaning years of regulatory rust off of the American economy. It is a natural addition to the progress we have made scaling back unhelpful regulations that make it harder for American businesses to create jobs and make opportunities for American workers more scarce.

Mr. Ring's confirmation will give the country a fully staffed NLRB once again and turn the page on the previous administration's efforts to remake this bipartisan Board into a one-sided political weapon. Even in a short amount of time last year, we saw just how much good a fully functioning NLRB can do for American workers when it calls balls and strikes fairly instead of bending over backward to

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



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meet Big Labor's every demand. Today we will have the chance to get things back to normal for the long term.

Mr. Ring has a distinguished record in labor negotiation. I would urge my colleagues to join me in voting to confirm him today.

After Mr. Ring, the Senate will turn to the nomination of Pat Pizzella to serve as Deputy Secretary of Labor. The fact that this Cabinet agency has gone 15 months without its No. 2 official is yet another testament to the historic obstruction visited on this administration by Senate Democrats. He has been sitting on the calendar for 6 months despite his ample qualifications. I would urge all of my colleagues to vote to finally advance Mr. Pizzella's nomination.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, this week we have been discussing the stark difference between the Obama administration's agenda and the policies that President Trump and this Republican Congress have implemented.

During the Obama years, the overwhelming majority of all the limited new growth and new jobs went to the biggest and richest urban areas. Times were good if you happened to live in New York, San Francisco, or a few other places, but if you were one of the millions of Americans in our Nation's towns, smaller cities, suburbs, or rural areas, they were not so good. According to one estimate, between 2010 and 2016, 73 percent of all the employment gains in the country went to metro areas with more than 1 million residents. Practically everywhere else, Americans either treaded water or started sinking.

This President and this Republican Congress were sent here to put this right, and because the American people gave us a chance to do so, they now have leaders in Washington who focus on cutting taxes instead of raising them, rolling back overregulation instead of piling on more suffocating rules, and looking out for the best interests of all workers and job creators, not just those in our biggest and wealthiest cities.

The early results from our inclusive opportunity agenda are clear. After years of stagnation, we are beginning to see signs that rural America turned a corner in 2017. One analysis found that last year, rural areas outpaced the rest of the country in job creation, relative to the share of the economy they started out with. There is still much, much more to do, but these early promising signs add up to hundreds of thousands of new jobs. That is a sight for sore eyes in Kentucky, West Virginia, Montana, Maine, and so many other States.

What about our smaller cities? I recently heard from my friend Senator TOOMEY that, because of this historic tax reform we passed last year, Car-

pen Technology in Reading, PA, will invest \$100 million in expanded manufacturing capabilities—\$100 million in our economy and American workers because of tax reform. For this American manufacturer, founded in 1889, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act means a new hot rolling mill to produce the special alloys for aerospace and consumer electronics. They are also investing in 3D printing. This is what happens when manufacturers have the breathing room to bet on the U.S. economy and on their American workforce. Breathing room is exactly what our policy is giving them. Carpenter already employs more than 3,000 Pennsylvanians, and with this kind of major capital investment, I expect they will be competing for future generations of skilled workers as well.

Pennsylvania should be proud of Senator TOOMEY. He is one of the leaders who have helped lead the charge for tax reform. It is a shame his colleague, the senior Senator for Pennsylvania, put party politics ahead of workers and taxpayers and voted to block tax reform right from the beginning.

Fortunately, my Democratic colleagues failed to block tax reform from taking place, even though many now want to repeal the law that has led to new jobs, higher wages, and increased opportunities all across our country.

Stories like these are just the first fruits of tax reform, regulatory reform, and all the other ways this Republican Congress is fighting for every American worker, job creator, and middle-class family.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. President.

Before I get to the substance of my remarks, I remind my dear friend the majority leader that the vast majority of the benefits of this tax break, this tax cut, went to the wealthiest of Americans and large corporations. What are they doing with the money? They are using most of it for buybacks. That was a buyback. They buy back their own stock. The CEO—already a rich guy—is making more money. The shareholders, one-third of whom are out of the country and most of whom are in the top 10 percent of America, make more money. The middle class and rural America particularly are left behind in this bill.

We could have done a tax bill where the benefits went to the middle class—not just some—10, 20 percent—but all. So this bill is a bit of a fake. There are small benefits for the middle class, along with harm to their healthcare. The things put in this bill are going to raise many people's premiums far more than their small tax break.

Let's be honest about this. This bill was done for the rich and the wealthy in power, and there were some benefits to the middle class, but it could have been so much better. Our Republican colleagues listened to the wealthy special interests, the large contributors, and that is how this bill came about.

By the way, because it creates a deficit of \$1.5 trillion—and I remind our leader that rural America really cares about deficits—there are a lot of Republicans, particularly the more conservative ones, who say: Now let's cut Medicare and Social Security. How is an elderly person in rural America going to feel about that?

I would simply say that this bill was not the right remedy for America, which is owed a lot better.

SPEAKER RYAN'S RETIREMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Speaker RYAN. I know Speaker RYAN quite well. He is a good man. He is always true to his word. Even though we disagree on most issues, in the areas where we can work together, I find him to be smart, thoughtful, and straightforward. I find him to have a great deal of integrity. We don't agree, but he has deep beliefs, and he is not like some on his side of the aisle who say: It is my way or no way. He is willing to meet you to try to get something done.

So I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Speaker RYAN. I admire him as a human being, as a religious man, and somebody who cares a lot about his family. I understand his frustrations; I do. When you have so many intransigent people in your caucus who say "it is my way or no way," and your job, even though you have deep beliefs, is to want to get something done, it is hard. It is hard.

Now, with his newfound political freedom, I hope the Speaker uses his remaining time in Congress to break free from these hard-right factions that have plagued him so and that have kept Congress from getting real things done. If he is willing to reach across the aisle, he will find Democrats willing and eager to work with him.

I say to Speaker RYAN: Let's work together. You are more of a free man now. Follow your instincts. Your beliefs will not be the same as ours, but you will want to try to come to some kind of an agreement where we can meet somewhere in the middle.

The job may be made harder because Congressmen SCALISE and MCCARTHY are now competing for Ryan's job and the hard right's favor—they are too vital in that caucus—but I believe Speaker RYAN is up to the job and can overcome that problem and work in his last few months here for the betterment of our country.

AVOIDING A CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, on the issues of yesterday and last

night, for months, I have heard my Republican colleagues argue that there is no need to pass legislation to protect Special Counsel Mueller and the Russian probe from President Trump because they have been assured by anonymous White House officials that it will not happen.

President Trump, in his own words on Monday night, made it plain as day that he may be considering firing the special counsel and/or the Deputy Attorney General, which would be equally egregious. The White House spokeswoman, from the podium, said President Trump believes he has the authority to fire the special counsel all by himself, and a report in the New York Times said President Trump considered firing Mueller as recently as December, in addition to a year ago in June.

Only an hour ago, the President tweeted that the “Fake & Corrupt Russia Investigation”—his words—was “headed up by all the Democrat loyalists, or people that worked for Obama.”

Mr. President, will you start telling the truth? Robert Mueller is a Republican. Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein is a Republican whom you appointed. Christopher Wray, the head of the FBI, is a Republican whom you appointed.

I don't know how long the President can believe people will swallow the bold mistruths he spews out day after day after day, but what he said—that the people the investigation was being headed up by are all Democratic loyalists or people who work for Obama—is patently false, and the President should retract it.

These kinds of remarks make it all too obvious that the President, who cares so little for truth, may be considering the firing of the special counsel or the Deputy Attorney General. So I would like to direct my remarks to my Republican colleagues. I say to my Republican colleagues, you can no longer rely on anonymous sources as a reason for delay or inaction on legislation to protect Mr. Mueller and avoid a constitutional crisis. The evidence is staring us all in the face. We cannot ignore the elephant in the room any longer because the consequences of the President taking action against Mueller or Rosenstein or issuing political pardons is just too dire. As Democrats have said, and as many Republicans have said, such action would precipitate a constitutional crisis in this country. The President doesn't seem to realize it, but I know my Republican colleagues do.

No person is above the law in this country—not even the President. He is not a King. He is the President. If the President were to interfere in any way with the chain of command in the Russia investigation or clean house at the Justice Department in order to install lackeys who will carry out his orders, we would be no better than a banana republic. The kinds of things we see happening in other parts of the globe would be happening here. In those

places, leaders use the levers of power to subvert or avoid accountability in all ways. President Trump seems to wish he could do just that.

I want to be crystal clear on this point. If the President were to take action against Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein, it would be every bit as grave of a mistake as removing Special Counsel Mueller. America, as we know it—as we love it—would diminish. I know Republicans and Democrats agree on that.

So why not take the bull by the horns? Why wouldn't we take immediate action to potentially prevent a constitutional crisis from coming to pass? Why don't we head it off at the pass and move bipartisan legislation that has been introduced this morning, through the Judiciary Committee—which I am told Senator GRASSLEY is seriously considering—on to the floor of the Senate, where I hope Leader MCCONNELL will place it. A bipartisan group this morning—Senators GRAHAM and TILLIS, BOOKER and COONS—have introduced legislation that would help protect the special counsel. Why not pass this legislation now and avoid a constitutional crisis? Why not avoid an injury to the body of this great country and then try to stitch it up? Why not avoid an injury instead of sustaining it and trying to stitch it up? That is what we should be doing.

Let's not wait until it is too late. Let's head the constitutional crisis off at the pass by passing the bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators GRAHAM, TILLIS, BOOKER, and COONS and take the threat of a crisis off the table right now.

So I urge Senator GRASSLEY to schedule a hearing and markup on this bill and to report it out of his committee. He must be sure not to water it down with amendments or accept changes that would render it useless. I urge Leader MCCONNELL to then take that bill and put it on the floor where we can debate and pass it. Surely, something this serious deserves the time and attention of U.S. Senators. I dare say, if bipartisan legislation like this came to the floor, it would pass by a large majority—Members of both parties—and the pressure on the House to do the same would be large.

The rule of law cannot be a partisan issue and should not be a partisan issue. We cannot let it become a partisan issue. The Congress must clearly, loudly, and with one voice pass legislation to ensure that any effort by the President to remove Special Counsel Mueller or Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein would be rendered unsuccessful.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of John F. Ring, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of five years expiring December 16, 2022.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

THE OLD GUARD

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, last Friday marked the 70th anniversary of the 3rd Infantry Regiment's reactivation, and as one of its veterans, I didn't want to let the moment pass without notice.

The 3rd Infantry Regiment, more commonly known as the Old Guard, serves across the Potomac River at Arlington National Cemetery. Most here and most in the Gallery have probably visited the cemetery and seen Old Guard soldiers guarding the Tomb of the Unknowns or conducting funerals. Arkansans who visit me here in the Capitol consistently tell me that Arlington is a highlight of their trip. That is not surprising to me, because Old Guard soldiers set the standard for their dedication, their diligence, and their devotion. The 3rd Infantry is the Nation's oldest Active-Duty infantry unit, and yet the reverence we feel for them goes beyond their mere length of service and to what they represent: the dignity of freedom.

On April 6, 1948, the 3rd Infantry was reactivated on orders of the Secretary of the Army. The ceremony was held just a few steps from here, on the East Plaza of the Capitol. Then, the Old Guard immediately conducted another ceremony to present the Flag of Liberation to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. That flag had flown over this very Capitol on Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1941. Then, those forces raised that flag over Rome, Berlin, and Tokyo after we had defeated the Axis powers. Finally, the Old Guard led the large Army Day parade from the Capitol down Constitution Avenue, where

President Truman sat in the reviewing stand at the Ellipse.

That is not bad for their first day back with the regimental colors. It had been only 18 months since the regiment, serving with the 106th Division as an occupation force in Berlin, was caught up in the rushed demobilizations at the end of World War II. But the Army needed an official ceremonial unit in the Nation's Capital, as well as the contingency force as tension built up between the United States and the Soviet Union. So the Army called the 3rd Infantry back into service at Fort Myer, right next to Arlington, and restored "the history formerly belonging" to the legendary regiment. That was due, in no small part, to the regiment's reputation for professionalism, present from its very beginning.

The 3rd Infantry was stood up in 1784, when the Continental Congress created the "First American Regiment." The War for Independence had convinced Congress that, whatever its fear of standing armies, the country needed at least a small professional fighting force to defend it. So the 3rd Infantry started as the lone professional regiment in the early days of our Republic, when our common defense was organized mostly around State militias. To this day, its members continue to display that professionalism by holding themselves to the most exacting standards as the Army's highest profile unit and the official escort to the President.

But the 3rd Infantry's professionalism also had a serious purpose: to defend America. So faithfully has the regiment served the American people that its history and the Nation's history are thoroughly intertwined.

First, it served at posts along the frontier, where it protected American settlements against Indian attacks under the leadership of General "Mad" Anthony Wayne, and it fought the British Imperial Army to a standstill during the War of 1812. Today, members of the regiment wear a buff strap on their left shoulders to commemorate that 18th century heritage.

After the war, peacetime demobilization and reorganization gave the regiment its current name, the 3rd Infantry. Then, during the Mexican War, the 3rd Infantry distinguished itself with bravery, skill, and stamina at every major battle of the war, in places like Palo Alto, Monterrey, and Vera Cruz. Its famed bayonet charge at the Battle of Cerro Gordo is what persuaded the War Department in 1922 to authorize the 3rd Infantry to march with bayonets fixed to their rifles—a privilege still reserved solely to that regiment in the entire U.S. Army. It was because of the 3rd Infantry's valor that General Winfield Scott, the commanding general of the Vera Cruz campaign, granted it the honor of leading the victorious march into Mexico City, during which he turned to his staff as the 3rd Infantry passed in review, and said: "Gentlemen, take off your hats to the Old Guard of the Army." Ever since, the name has stuck.

After the Mexican War came the Civil War, which divided not only our Nation but also our Army. Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee, who both fought alongside the Old Guard in Mexico, now faced off against each other. The 3rd Infantry fought every major battle in the war's first 2 years: First Bull Run, Second Bull Run, the Seven Days Battles, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and, finally, Gettysburg. Suffering casualties that exceeded its original strength, the Old Guard ended the war at the Union's mobile headquarters, standing alongside General Grant at the Appomattox courthouse as he accepted General Lee's surrender.

In the days that followed, the vast majority of State volunteers returned home to their families—not the Old Guard. The "regulars," as they were known back then, went straight back to the front, again protecting settlers from Indian raids across the western frontier. They defeated Spanish forces in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. They fought rebel insurgents in the Philippines and then returned to fight Muslim insurgents there, too, in some of the same places where the Islamic State is present today.

They guarded our border with Mexico during World War I. They helped to get the lend-lease program going in the early days of World War II, before deploying to Europe itself. But it was after the Old Guard's reactivation that it assumed the duties for which it is rightly famous today: performing ceremonies and military honor funerals.

For its first 162 years, the Old Guard defended America's frontiers and fought its wars, both at home and abroad. Now these new responsibilities have defined the Old Guard's mission for the last 70 years. The size and structure of the regiment has evolved, just as Arlington National Cemetery itself has grown. The Old Guard's prominence has increased, as it has participated in major internationally televised events, such as the ceremony to inter the unknown soldiers from World War II and the Korean war in 1958 and the state funeral for President Kennedy in 1963. But the essence of the mission has not changed since 1948.

It is this history, this reliability, this steady, sober leadership that the Old Guard has become known for. Their skill and proficiency, their care and attention to detail, their faithfulness and discipline—all of them—set the highest of standards of military conduct and character. Our fellow Americans see all that whenever they visit Arlington. They can imagine it on the battlefield. Then, they have little wonder why our soldiers accomplish such amazing feats of valor. That is why the Old Guard is held in such reverence, and that is why it is fitting to mark this important anniversary.

The Old Guard represents the best of our country, but also the best in ourselves. Freedom isn't free. It requires self-sacrifice and self-discipline. That

is what makes it a noble and, therefore, a fulfilling way of life. For reminding us of that dignity—the dignity that comes with being a free people—the men and women of the Old Guard deserve our deepest thanks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip is recognized.

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

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

VENEZUELA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week, I spent 4 days in Venezuela. I had never been there before. I was given an opportunity to get a visa to go to the country, and I jumped at the opportunity. Venezuela, of course, on the north end of the South American continent, is a constant source of concern in the United States and the region, and I wanted to see for myself what was happening. No doubt, many are aware that Venezuela has been suffering devastating economic and democratic backsliding, but what I found was a country that is on the edge of collapse, facing overlapping economic, humanitarian, and political crises.

On the economic side, Venezuela has so many positive things. It is rich in natural beauty, oil, minerals, and human talent, but it has seen its economy run into the ground by mindless price controls, multiple exchange rates, and gross mismanagement. Inflation is rampant and expected to reach 13,000 percent this year, leading to what some call "a race for survival."

Imagine walking down the main street of Caracas and seeing long lines at every ATM. Why are they there? Because each day, the residents of Venezuela must go to the ATM machine with their credit card or debit card and take out the maximum withdrawal allowed. It is hundreds of thousands of Bolivars, which sound like more money than you could possibly need, but it translates into 20 cents—waiting an hour at an ATM machine for 20 cents' worth of currency so that you can ride the bus back and forth to work. That is what life is like in the capital of Venezuela.

They have universally discredited and arbitrary price controls that are eerily reminiscent of the failed policies in Cuba and the Soviet Union. They have decimated local production and left basic goods unavailable or unaffordable.

I went down the main street in Caracas and saw many shops but no customers. Basic goods were available—shampoo or diapers, for example—but they cost the equivalent of 2 or 3 months of salary. We stopped and did a translation at one store that isn't under price controls, and we found that a pound of hamburger costs \$4, which doesn't sound bad, except that that is the minimum monthly wage in Venezuela—for a pound of hamburger. People waited in long lines.

Rampant inflation—hyperinflation, really—has made actual cash scarce, and near worthless when it can actually be found. I have never visited a country where I never touched their currency. They warned me against it. They said: If you buy things here, as a tourist, you are going to pay 20 times what local people pay. They have exchange rates that are bizarre and change by the minute. These people live with this every single day.

The government of Maduro stages raids into formal grocery stores to impose arbitrary price controls, leaving the owners unable to stock their shelves or run a functioning business. If there is a rumor that there are eggs for sale somewhere in Caracas, there is a rush to that location, and people wait for hours in the hopes that they can buy eggs.

As a result, informal markets are springing up trying to meet the people's demands. Yet even while I walked through these markets, I saw long lines. From the second floor in the back, in the dark, there was a long line waiting. I went to the front to see what they were waiting for. They wanted to buy toilet paper.

Business leaders told me that they are being vilified by the government, forced to sell products below cost and out of markets so the government can be the exclusive seller of imported goods.

Listen to this. They also shared stories of workers fainting on the job from hunger. Of particular concern, one of the largest employers in Venezuela said they decided they had to start bringing fruit to the workplace in the morning so their workers could get something to eat. When they fainted, it was not only dangerous to them but to people around them, and they wanted to keep their workers awake. Only one out of three people in Venezuela eats three meals a day. There are children fainting at school.

The government has run the state oil industry into collapse, treating it as its cash cow and as a way to line their pockets. Currently, there is little or no investment in the oil industry, the national oil industry of Venezuela. There is little or no maintenance, and there is a mass exodus of skilled personnel and engineers. What would an engineer working for a Venezuelan national oil company earn in the course of a year? Dramatically more than most Venezuelans—\$1,700 a year in annual income. What do they earn in other countries in Latin America with the same skills? They would earn an average income of \$85,000 a year. Is it any surprise they are leaving?

It is also no surprise that the country is suffering a heartbreaking humanitarian crisis, one that is notable for malnutrition and a breakdown of basic public health. Brave and dedicated healthcare workers—and I have met some; NGO leaders told me of a shortage of vaccines with outbreaks of measles and diphtheria that haven't been

seen for decades. Malaria is at record levels.

When the public health officials gave me a briefing on the public health crisis of Venezuela, they said that the maternal mortality rate—the death of mothers—is at the level it was 50 years ago, the early 1960s. The same thing is true for infant mortality—that high a level. You have to go to South Sudan, Yemen, or Syria to find comparable public health crises, and those three countries are all at war. Venezuela is at war with itself. In fact, one expert said that the outbreak of measles, diphtheria, and malaria was the worst he had seen, certainly the worst in all of South America.

With Venezuelans flooding into neighboring countries, many of them are spreading diseases that have been cured in so many countries around the world. Basic diabetes, asthma, and HIV treatments are simply not available. For 4 months now, HIV patients have not been given medication.

A staggering number of hospitals cannot perform basic services. Many do not have any capacity to perform a blood test. There are no x ray machines available on a 24/7 basis. Many of them don't have electricity. Some do not even have clean water.

Venezuelans are suffering malnutrition, and it is particularly acute for children, who suffer for a lifetime due to stunted brain development. One expert said that the rates of malnutrition have affected more than 8 percent of the population. In some areas, the percentage of people suffering from malnutrition is as high as 15 percent. You can see it on the streets of Caracas. When you look at the public parks, you see these children—thin limbs, spindly legs and arms, and you think to yourself: These kids are not getting enough to eat.

It is hard to know precisely about all of these statistics because the government has officially stopped collecting and releasing information. They leave it up to private organizations.

What I found particularly cruel is the government's supposed effort to help with hunger. A provision of a monthly food basket was linked to having the right political identification card. Sadly, these food boxes are imported. Someone is making a lot of money in that process, with corrupt middlemen taking a cut at multiple steps along the way, all to provide a politically manipulated lifeline that meets only 7 of the 12 basic food needs.

The regime has also linked these food rations to polling stations during elections, which brings me to the third overlapping crisis, a democratic crisis. Let me acknowledge that Hugo Chavez did, in fact, win his initial terms in democratic elections. He tapped into public disenchantment with the failure of traditional governing parties to address the deep chasms of poverty in Venezuela. He even said "I am not the cause, I am the consequence," referring to his rise to power. But his election,

like that of so many other autocrats at heart, also brought the steady dismantling of the country's democracy, a path followed by the current President.

You see, in Venezuela, political parties that look threatening are arbitrarily banned. Political opponents who appear to be popular are jailed or exiled or just plain disqualified from running for office. Government institutions, like the Venezuelan election commission, are simply political tools of the regime. The rule of law has collapsed.

In 2015, the opposition won a sweeping victory in legislative elections. What happened next? The President of Venezuela, Maduro, installed an illegitimate rubberstamp constituent assembly to usurp the legitimately elected National Assembly. It was his way of stopping his opponents. The supreme court and national election council are stacked with partisan cronies who do whatever the regime asks, regardless of the law.

Now, with the country on the edge of economic collapse, the President has called for a snap election on May 20—more than 6 months before it traditionally would be held. He wants to move quickly, for fear that he might lose. Maduro doesn't want to risk losing even under a rigged system, so he is rushing forward with this election that doesn't even come close to meeting established international standards.

What I found, and bears repeating, is that the critics of the Venezuelan Government regime and their actions are not confined to the United States or Canada. They include Central American countries like Panama and South American countries, which have expressed their displeasure with Maduro's actions, as well as the European Union's displeasure. The parties and candidates still remain arbitrarily banned. There is zero trust in discredited election commissions, and registration and voting processes have been dramatically manipulated.

I met with some of the opposition leaders, and they told me what happens when people try to vote. They have to go through an elaborate process with a machine to register to vote. It is controlled. It takes too much time. It limits the opposition from registering their voters. There is little time for a legitimate campaign, especially with government control of the media. Reputable, long-term election monitors are nowhere to be seen, and none seem to be planned for the actual election, either.

Under these conditions, how can any such election be credible? If President Maduro proceeds with this May 20 election under these circumstances, he is going to find Venezuela further isolated.

Amid these deeply troubling and ominous conditions, I nonetheless met many brave and dedicated Venezuelans who are trying to endure and reverse this horrible situation. Doctors, nurses, civic leaders, business people,

politicians, and so many others are sharing food and medicine, running for office and facing the threat of arrest or exile, documenting human rights abuses in the shrinking media state, trying to run businesses in a broken economy. It is an incredible act of courage each day.

I also met with former political prisoners, political opposition members, and their families who are under constant threat or already under some kind of arrest. I would name them here, but to do so would put them in danger in Venezuela. I was moved by their dedication and humanity.

I am haunted by the comments of one group of young idealists. Over dinner Friday night in Caracas, they talked about the future. They said: If we called the same group of five opposition leaders together a year from now, we would be lucky if three showed up. Two of us will be exiled or jailed between now and then. That is what they face by being political opponents of the current regime. I fear how many of Venezuela's most talented will be sacrificed under these conditions.

The regime is also tragically holding a U.S. citizen, Josh Holt of Utah, on criminal charges. The charges are nonsense. I visited with Josh Holt in his prison. The prison is known locally as hell on earth. Josh and his Venezuelan wife have served 21 months, with no end in sight, and they still haven't gone through the criminal process. He is suffering, and he should be. It is understandable. He is clearly being held as a political hostage. I appealed to the President and every member of the government to release this young man and his Venezuelan wife and her daughter so that they could come back to the United States. Keeping Josh Holt as a political hostage will just isolate the Maduro regime even more. I am one of a bipartisan group of Members in Congress who will continue to push for his immediate release.

Lastly, I want to note that every time I go on one of these trips overseas, including to some of the most far-flung corners of the globe, I am always moved by the group of talented Americans working for us and representing us; those are the men and women in our Embassies, without exception. Under the Charge d'Affaires, Todd Robinson, our Embassy team in Caracas is a point of great pride and outstanding public service. The conditions under which they are forced to operate are extraordinarily stressful.

There was some small hope that negotiations led by the Vatican and regional leaders or most recently hosted in the Dominican Republic could lead to some kind of path forward between the Venezuelan Government and the opposition before it is too late, but all of these have failed. Some hoped years ago that a group known as the Boston Group—American and Venezuelan elected officials—might be the beginning of a dialogue and might be continued to this day, but it is increasingly

difficult to see that possibility. I met some of the Venezuelan Boston Group members. Several of them are deeply committed to this administration currently in power. Many of them talk about changes that need to be made in Venezuela. I haven't given up hope completely that there may be some voices that can move this country back to a civilized status.

Let me be clear in my concluding message to the Venezuelan Government, specifically, a message that they should proceed with an election that meets the following basic standards: All political prisoners must be released, and all candidates and parties must be allowed to compete. There must be at least 6 months for a legitimate campaign. The national election council should be restructured and led by a credible group of professionals on an evenly divided partisan basis so that it isn't loaded for one party or another. There must be no linking of food with voting or political party affiliation. The National Assembly must have its powers restored. Credible international and local election monitors must be allowed to observe preelection and actual election processes, with full accreditation and access. Going forward otherwise will only bring more suffering to the people of Venezuela and more isolation to their nation.

Republicans and Democrats don't agree on much these days, certainly not here in Washington on Capitol Hill, but we do agree that Venezuela and the consequences of President Maduro's regime continue to lead that nation down a negative path, a path of suffering.

I yield the floor.

CHINA AND TRADE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I preface my remarks today about China with a recent article from *The Economist*, dated March 1, 2018, which, I think, does a very good job of crystalizing what the hopes and aspirations that we in the West had for China and what the reality has turned out to be.

It points out that in March 2000, Bill Clinton divided the American opinion on China into two camps. The first, he said, was of the optimists, and the second was of the hawks and the pessimists. The optimists, as it describes it, have an eye on the future and can see China becoming the next great capitalist tiger with the biggest market in the world. That was the optimistic view. *The Economist* writes that the hawks and pessimists, who were stuck in the past, saw China as stubbornly remaining as the world's last, great Communist dragon and a threat to stability in Asia.

As this article points out, it was not an either/or. It called it a both/and. It concludes that the China of Xi Jinping is a great mercantilist dragon that is under strict Communist Party control and that it is using the power of its vast markets to cow and co-opt capitalist rivals to bend and break the rules-based order and to push America to the periphery of the Asia-Pacific re-

gion. It calls this one of the starkest reversals in modern geopolitics.

Indeed, the administration's national security strategy that President Trump rolled out just a couple of months ago states that China challenges American power, influence, and interests. It points out again that the hopes and aspirations of the optimists appear to have been dashed. Instead, we have one of the starkest reversals in modern geopolitics. This leads me to the subject I want to at least start talking about because it does relate to China.

Today, in the Subcommittee on International Trade, within the Senate Finance Committee, which I happen to chair, we are convening a hearing on trade issues and China. The core issue my colleagues and I will examine involves challenges to U.S. businesses, manufacturers, and service providers who are trying to get access to the Chinese market—a market that represents the second largest economy in the world. China, of course, has almost unfettered access to the United States. There are important protections in place, like the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, which does look at some of those investments to make sure our national security interests are not compromised.

By and large, China has open access to the United States and the U.S. market. China is the United States' largest merchandise trading partner and the third largest export market for U.S. goods abroad. Although the legitimate flow of goods and services between the United States and China has increased over the years and is, in many respects, a positive thing, statistics alone do not capture the whole story, hence the preface that I gave about *The Economist's* view of what has changed in China.

Unfortunately, while Chinese companies largely enjoy open access to U.S. markets and an economy that is receptive to foreign investment, U.S. companies are not afforded reciprocity in this regard. In his State of the Union Message, the President made that point, which is that in our trading relationships, we expect reciprocity—in other words, to treat our trading partners the same way they treat us—hopefully, to everybody's advantage.

U.S. companies that seek to do business in China often encounter—I would say always encounter—a protectionist system, one that employs predatory tactics and promotes domestic industries over foreign competitors, many of which receive State subsidies. In many cases, China has used trade as a weapon and coerced U.S. companies to enter into joint ventures or other business arrangements that require a company to hand over its key technology and know-how—the so-called secret sauce of its business—in order to gain market access.

This practice has already begun to erode America's technological advantage and undermine our defense industrial base, which is something that

should concern all of us and is the subject of a revision of the Committee on Foreign Investment of the United States, CFIUS, statute that is going to be coming out of the Senate Banking Committee and the House Financial Services Committee. It will be an updating of the CFIUS process to meet the challenges of today.

Of course, under section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, the Trump administration is currently considering potential investment restrictions to address the harm that has resulted from China's effort to acquire sensitive technologies through investments. I look forward to working with the President and others to ensure that the proper steps are taken, but the real issues are clear, and we will be considering them in more detail at the hearing this afternoon on China's restrictive market.

Even though multiple administrations have attempted to engage Chinese leaders on their trade practices, the high-level diplomatic talks have generally yielded little progress and have often resulted in commitments with zero follow-up action. Discussions may continue in the future, but China's market access reforms are still too slow, and real barriers exist. Reciprocal treatment for U.S. companies should not be too much to ask. Indeed, it is the minimum we should insist upon. It is my hope that today's hearing will paint a clear picture of the problems that persist with access to Chinese markets and that significant reforms will follow.

JUDGES

Mr. President, on a second brief matter, I will mention that yesterday was the 1-year anniversary of Neil Gorsuch joining the U.S. Supreme Court.

Former Attorney General Ed Meese called Justice Gorsuch someone in the mold of the late Justice Antonin Scalia—an impartial judge who applies laws as they are written and who shows an abiding respect for the rights that are guaranteed by the Constitution.

As I have numerous times in the past, I commend President Trump on his outstanding selection, and I congratulate Justice Gorsuch on his first year of serving on our Nation's highest Court.

Let's not forget that Justice Gorsuch is not the only good news when it comes to the Federal judiciary. He is only one part of a much larger and, often, untold story. As of earlier this month, 30 article III Federal life tenure judges have been confirmed under President Trump's tenure—30. That is due, in large part, to the commitment of the Senate, under our majority leader's leadership, to making sure that this was a priority—to confirm judges who have been passed out of the Judiciary Committee here on the floor of the Senate and to maximize our floor time in order to get that priority accomplished.

My home State has filled two appellate vacancies, as well as two district

vacancies so far. Additionally, five accomplished lawyers are waiting for hearings for Texas district vacancies, and two more are waiting to be confirmed for those vacancies. So is Andy Oldham, who is an accomplished lawyer who has been nominated to fill the third seat on the Fifth Circuit since President Trump has become President. I hope we will continue to move all of these judicial nominees and many more across the country very soon.

I know there is a lot of focus on the executive branch and the legislative branch, but I believe the judiciary is the bedrock of our government as it ensures that equal justice is available to all, no matter what one's station in life. It is the rule of law that enables all of our other freedoms to be possible. It enables our economy to flourish, and it creates opportunities for our people so that they can pursue their dreams. That is how important I believe the judiciary is, and we should never forget it.

Yesterday, President Trump took another important step in this area when he announced he would be nominating David Morales to fill one of the vacancies I just mentioned, this one in Corpus Christi, TX, in the U.S. Southern District. David has extensive experience in working for the Texas attorney general and the Governor, as well as in the University of Texas system. He was recommended by Senator CRUZ and my Federal Judicial Evaluation Committee—a bipartisan group of the best and brightest lawyers the State of Texas has to offer. David was recommended to us by what we call the FJEC. It performs a great service not only to Senator CRUZ and me but to the public, generally, in its vetting of these potential nominees for judicial service and its recommending them to us. David Morales will bring more than 23 years of complex litigation and agency dispute resolution to bear.

I hope our colleagues will join me in making sure his nomination is swiftly considered and that he is confirmed.

I think David and the other Texans whom President Trump has nominated will make excellent additions to our courts. They are the kinds of people we should want in our courts—those who will impartially ensure that justice is done and the law, as written, is followed no matter who the litigant is or the type of controversy at issue.

FIGHT ONLINE SEX TRAFFICKING ACT

Finally, Mr. President, for the skeptics who like to say that nothing good ever gets done here in Washington, I will mention one other item and the real positive consequences of a bill we just passed and that is being signed into law by the President today—the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act, FOSTA.

The effort to pass it was led by our colleague, the junior Senator from Ohio, Mr. PORTMAN. I and others were honored to serve as original cosponsors of this legislation in the Senate. We

have been working on this issue since at least 2012, when I introduced a resolution, along with a bipartisan group of my colleagues, that called for backpage.com to cease its facilitation of human trafficking, including of children, and prostitution by eliminating the adult section of the website. We had to pass this law because, when it would go to court, under the Communications Decency Act, it was able to claim that Congress had not carved out a provision for trafficking, just merely for child pornography. Thus, it had escaped our attempts to bring it to justice in the past.

This important legislation goes along with a bill we passed in 2015, called the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, which refocused our efforts on fighting the sex trade here in the United States by targeting those who purchased human trafficking victims, providing services to the survivors of this crime, and giving law enforcement new tools to target the organized networks that are responsible for commercial sexual exploitation. That was just a few years ago. Yet, just this last month, as I said, we changed section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to allow State attorneys general and victims to seek justice against websites that knowingly assist or facilitate commercial sexual exploitation and child sex trafficking.

The good news is that since that time, a grand jury in Arizona has indicted 7 people, who are affiliated with backpage, on 93 counts of money laundering, facilitating prostitution, and other crimes. The indictment alleged that the website essentially operated as a highly lucrative online brothel.

After we passed FOSTA, the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act, some websites announced major policy changes and shut down sections that may have helped to enslave and entrap young women. So it has not just been the indictment and, hopefully, the conviction of people who facilitated backpage over the years, but it has also had a deterrent effect on other websites that have done similar things and has encouraged them, in their own self-interests, to shut down those sections that have helped to facilitate human trafficking.

Backpage has now been seized by Federal law enforcement. It can no longer serve as an open forum for the exploitation of children and the purchase of human beings for sexual slavery. These are all positive signs that the law we have enacted is making a real difference, ensuring that this malignant conduct does not go unpunished. The prosecution and dismantling of backpage has sent a clear message to the pimps and the buyers responsible for sexual slavery, resulting in the shutdown of many other sites involved in the commercial sex trade. This includes message boards where individuals post accounts of the sexual assaults of women and children as if they were reviewing a restaurant menu or product.

As I said yesterday, with reference to Facebook, the internet can be a very good thing, but we can't be naive in ignoring the dangers it represents when put to a perverse use to women, children, and others. What we did with FOSTA, or the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act, is an unqualified good thing. It is something that Republicans and Democrats worked on together with the President to pass and to sign into law. It is a good thing that we changed the provisions that inadvertently shielded the facilitators of sex trafficking online. It is one way we can make the internet a safer place for everyone.

I applaud the bipartisan efforts of the Members here in both Chambers of Congress, as well as the President for his support. For those who think nothing good ever comes out of Washington these days and that Democrats and Republicans can't get along to pursue the public interest, this is exhibit No. 1, which I would offer, of the most recent efforts we have made to shut down this modern day human slavery.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote on the confirmation of John Ring to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board, NLRB. I am glad that we are voting on this nomination because, once Mr. Ring is confirmed, we will once again have a full five-member National Labor Relations Board.

Created in 1935, the NLRB administers the National Labor Relations Act, which seeks to mitigate and eliminate labor-related impediments to the free flow of commerce. The 5 board members have 5-year, staggered terms, and the general counsel has a 4-year term.

The NLRB should be a neutral umpire in labor disputes. While Board partisanship did not start under President Obama, it became worse under him. An overly partisan Board creates instability in our Nation's workplaces and does not serve the intent of the law, which is to create stable labor relations and the free flow of commerce.

The NLRB under President Obama took two particularly harmful actions that are still in place today. First, the joint employer decision threatens the American dream for owners of the Nation's 780,000 franchise locations. Under that decision, companies could find it much more practical to own all their stores and restaurants and daycare centers themselves, rather than encourage more franchisee-owned small businesses.

Second is the ambush election rule, which can force a union election before employers and employees have a chance to figure out what is going on. The rule also forces employers to provide union organizers with a list of employees' work locations, shifts, job classifications, personal email addresses, and home and cellular telephone numbers. This information is highly personal, and employees may not want

it shared, but workers do not have a choice. I am pleased the Board is accepting comments on whether this rule should be revised.

A fully staffed board is vital to both employees and employers, and I am not the only one who thinks that is important. At a Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, HELP, hearing in September 2014, then-Chairman Harkin said, "Keeping the NLRB fully staffed and able to do its work will send a strong message to the American people that yes, Washington can work, and our government can function."

While attending the Catholic University Columbus School of Law in the evening, Mr. Ring worked for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. After law school, he joined the law firm Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, where he has worked since 1988. Mr. Ring flourished at the firm, where he worked his way up from summer associate to coleader of the firm's labor and management relations practice.

Mr. Ring was nominated to be a member of the NLRB on January 18, 2018. The HELP Committee held Mr. Ring's hearing on March 1, 2018, and he completed all paperwork in accordance with the committee's rules, practices, and procedures. We received Mr. Ring's HELP Committee paperwork and his Office of Government Ethics paperwork on January 24, 2018, 36 days before his hearing. Mr. Ring offered to meet with all HELP Committee members and met with five of them, including two Democrats. Following his hearing, Mr. Ring responded to 97 questions for the record, or 158, if you include subquestions. These responses were provided to Senators prior to the markup, and the HELP Committee favorably reported Mr. Ring's nomination on March 14, 2018.

I look forward to voting for John Ring, and I trust that he will serve with distinction.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, this week the Senate is considering two important labor-related nominations: the nominations of John Ring to serve as a Member of the National Labor Relations Board, NLRB, and Patrick Pizzella to serve as Deputy Secretary of Labor, DOL. Unfortunately, given the nominees' well-documented hostility to the collective bargaining rights of working men and women, I will not vote to confirm either of them.

If Mr. Ring is confirmed, he will restore the Board to the 3-2 anti-labor majority, with no assurances that President Trump will fill the Democratic seat of former chairman Mark Gaston Pearce expiring this summer. It is important to note here that nominations to the NLRB have traditionally been confirmed in bipartisan pairs.

Mr. Ring authored blog posts calling the NLRB an "activist" organization during the Obama administration. In other blog posts, he characterized the NLRB's union election procedures as "some of the biggest assaults on em-

ployer rights in recent history." In fact, the election rule simply modernized union election procedures and has actually resulted in slightly fewer union elections.

During the brief 3-2 Republican majority late last year before then-Board Chairman Phillip Miscimarra completed his term on December 16, 2017, the NLRB rushed to overturn landmark decisions, weakening workers' rights under the National Labor Relations Act, NLRA, and undermining the statute's core purpose of promoting collective bargaining, including the Browning-Ferris Industries joint employer standard decision. The Board's inspector general has faulted those efforts, and the Board has been forced to vacate the joint employer decision. A new Republican majority may reorganize the NLRB in ways that are unfavorable to workers and their collective bargaining rights.

Mr. Pizzella is a vocal advocate of so-called right-to-work laws. They really ought to be called right-to-be-exploited laws. As Ross Eisenbray of the Economic Policy Institute reported last year, "Wages are 3.1 percent lower in so-called 'right to work' (RTW) states, for union and nonunion workers alike—after correctly accounting for differences in cost of living, demographics, and labor market characteristics. The negative impact of RTW laws translates to \$1,558 less a year in earnings for a typical full-time worker."

There is a clear correlation between the decline in union membership and stagnant wages. If the Senate confirms Mr. Pizzella and Mr. Ring, the Republican assault on unions and collective bargaining rights enshrined in the National Labor Relations Act, NLRA, will gain momentum, and working people and their families will suffer as a result.

Mr. Pizzella previously served at the Department of Labor, as Assistant Secretary of Labor for Administration and Management under President George W. Bush. During Mr. Pizzella's previous tenure at DOL, the Government Accountability Office, GAO, determined that the Department left workers vulnerable to unscrupulous employers while investigating complaints of minimum wage, overtime, and child labor violations. GAO found that the Wage and Hour Division's complaint intake, complaint resolution, and investigation processes were ineffective and discouraged workers from lodging wage-theft complaints.

Mr. Pizzella also has expressed his antipathy to Federal workers and their unions. I am proud to represent many of these public servants. The Federal workforce is one of our Nation's finest assets, and public sector unions make it more productive.

It is ironic that the Senate is considering two nominees this week who are

openly hostile to the collective bargaining rights of working people. Yesterday was Equal Pay Day, which symbolizes the number of extra days a typical woman who works full-time, year-round must work into 2018 to be paid what a typical man was paid in 2017. Women are still only paid 80 cents for every dollar paid to a man, a yearly pay difference of \$10,086, and the disparity is even worse for many women of color.

Based on an analysis of Census Bureau data, the National Partnership for Women and Families is releasing a study which concludes that, in sum, women employed full time in the U.S. will lose nearly \$900 billion to the wage gap this year. If the wage gap were closed, on average, a working woman in this country would be able to afford more than 1 additional year of tuition and fees for a 4-year public university, 74 more weeks of food for her family, nearly 7 more months of mortgage and utility payments, or 14 more months of childcare.

If Mr. Ring and Mr. Pizzella and President Trump are unwilling to protect female workers and try to close that pay gap, which seems likely, then let us let us arm women with the most powerful tool in our legal system: the U.S. Constitution. Let us finally pass the Equal Rights Amendment, ERA.

The ERA is barely longer than a tweet, but it would finally give women full and equal protection under the Constitution. Section 1 of the ERA states, quite simply, that "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

When Congress proposed the ERA in 1972, it provided that the measure had to be ratified by three-fourths of the States—38 States—within 7 years. This deadline was later extended to 10 years by a joint resolution, but ultimately only 35 out of 38 States had ratified the ERA when the deadline expired in 1982. Note that the deadline wasn't contained in the amendment itself; the deadline was in the text of the joint resolution.

Article V of the Constitution contains no time limits for the ratification of amendments, so the ERA deadline is arbitrary. To put the matter in context, the 27th Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibits congressional pay raises without an intervening election, was ratified in 1992, 203 years after it was first proposed.

The Senate should vote on a Senate Joint Resolution I have introduced—S.J. Res. 5—to remove the ERA deadline, and every State in our Union that has not yet taken up its consideration should do so without any further delay.

Nevada became the 36th State to ratify the amendment last March, leaving the ERA just two States short of the required three-fourths of the States threshold under the Constitution if the deadline were to be abolished.

The ERA would incorporate a ban on gender-based discrimination, explicitly

written or otherwise, into the Constitution. It could change outcomes in discrimination cases by requiring the Supreme Court to use the higher standard of "strict scrutiny" when assessing those cases, the same standard used in racial and religious discrimination cases.

I think many—perhaps most—Americans would be shocked to learn that our Constitution has no provision expressly prohibiting gender discrimination.

In a 2011 interview, the late Justice Antonin Scalia summed up the need for an Equal Rights Amendment best. He said, "Certainly the Constitution does not require discrimination on the basis of sex. The only issue is whether it prohibits it. It doesn't."

So I ask my Senate colleagues this question most sincerely: Are we willing to do what must be done to prohibit gender discrimination in the Constitution? The people being affected by systemic gender inequality are our constituents. They are our mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, and our granddaughters. They are American citizens who deserve basic respect and equality.

It is time to end the assault on working families in this country. Let's end discrimination by making it possible to ratify the ERA. Let's close the pay gap. Let's stop denigrating Federal workers. Let's support, not attack, the collective bargaining rights that are the cornerstone of a strong middle class. I regret that the Senate is poised to confirm two individuals who are unlikely to assist these efforts. We can and must do better.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

FAIR TRADE

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, let me do a quick history lesson with this body. In 1773, the Colonies we were getting more and more frustrated with King George. There were a lot of issues we raised with him—a lot of taxes, a lot of changes, things that were happening in the judiciary, things that were arbitrary that were coming down. Then it boiled to a head.

In December of 1773, a group of American colonists went out to Boston infuriated with the tariff policy over tea. The British East India Company had special access that no one else had. They had no taxes and everyone else had a tax—a tariff. It pushed out all of the other companies except for the British East India Company. A group of American colonists went out to one of the ships, grabbed all the tea in the harbor, and threw it overboard, creating the legendary Boston Tea Party.

That was an argument about tariffs. It was an argument about international trade. It was an argument about American companies and fair trade, and we still talk about it today.

It is interesting to note that in our letter that Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1776, which we now call the Declaration of Independence, in the long list of grievances that we wrote out to King

George, we included this line: We are cutting off our trade with all parts of the world as one of our big grievances. That grievance fell between the grievance of the British Government allowing British soldiers to murder inhabitants in America and our taxes without consent. In between those was cutting off our international trade. We have been free traders as a nation since even before we were a nation, and we have been passionate about keeping it fair but keeping it free and keeping it open.

Free trade is a big issue for us, and for some reason it has become this big national conversation again. Should we have free and fair trade? Should we continue to engage? What does it mean to have a deficit in our trade? Does it have to be equal with every country, that they buy from us as much as we buy from them? Suddenly, this has become a brand-new dialogue again.

I wish to bring a couple of real world moments to this, beginning with the history lesson, by stating that trade—and international trade, specifically—was important to us even before we were a country. We were gathering supplies from all over the world to be able to do our basic production. We are still doing that today.

For some reason I run into people that think this international supply chain is something new in this generation. I tell them that they should look at our history and see that the United States has always had an international supply chain.

We are also 25 percent of the world's economy. There is no nation in the world that can afford to buy as much from us as we buy from them. We are the largest economy in the world, by far. We are going to buy more from other countries.

The issue is, How does this work in our economy and how do we make sure we protect American manufacturing and the American consumer at the same time? Let me walk through what this looks like.

Charlie and Mary Swanson are Oklahomans and third-generation farmers and ranchers who live in Roosevelt, OK, with a whopping population of 241. The agricultural products they produce help feed the world. They raise wheat, cotton, cattle, and milo.

Every year their crops are harvested using John Deere equipment. We look at the John Deere tractor and its beautiful green and we think: That is a great American company, except that parts of the equipment also come in its original form from Mexico. Parts come from India, and parts from Germany. Most of the parts come from the United States. They employ 60,000 people in the United States.

It is a great American company—John Deere—but their cabs are made in Germany. Their hydraulic cylinders are made in Mexico. The castings from the foundry are from Iowa, but the guidance products are from California. Some of the transmission and electronic parts come from India, and

other parts are from Missouri. We see that as a great American tractor.

The crews that harvest some of the Swanson's crops are folks that come in—legally, by the way—from New Zealand, Ireland, or South Africa. The wheat they produce goes to export markets all over the world. Some of it goes to Egypt, some to India, Japan, and South Korea.

Their cotton is used all over the United States, but it is also shipped to China, as well, to produce fabrics. Some of the fabrics end up being made into garments that are shipped from Vietnam. Some of them end up right back here in the United States again, having started from the cotton from Roosevelt, OK.

The milo they raise goes to feed. Most of that feed goes to Texas. If you are from Oklahoma, you may consider that international trade, but it is still domestic trade. A lot of the feed goes to China.

They raise cattle, our great American beef. We eat as much beef as we can possibly eat in Oklahoma, and the rest of it we ship all over the world. Their beef is used in Oklahoma and all across the United States, but it is also sent to Japan, Korea, and Mexico.

Understand this, just as an aside: In 2017, U.S. beef producers exported 1.2 million metric tons of beef worth \$2 billion. That is just American beef going around the world. Two leading partners in that are Canada and Mexico—\$980 million in exports. It is a big part of what they do.

Charlie Swanson drives a Ford F-150 pickup. It is a great American product; isn't it? It is a great Ford truck. That F-150, by the way, is a fantastic vehicle. It is completely assembled in the United States, but the aluminum in that great American truck comes from Canada. About 15 percent of the components in that great American truck come from Mexico. Some parts even come from China. That F-150 is not only used extensively in the United States, but it is also shipped around the world. There are a lot of F-150 trucks on the roads in Mexico, Canada, and, yes, even in China.

That F-150 rides on four good, solid American-made tires, but the steel cord in those good American tires comes from all over the world. The steel in most of our tires is not made in the United States. A lot of the chemicals that go into the production of those tires are from Europe, Asia, and Latin America. They are good American tires. A lot of them are made in Oklahoma in the Goodyear facility—a phenomenal facility—or the Michelin plant in Ardmore. They make great American tires for a lot of vehicles all across the United States, but they have parts and pieces from around the world in those American-made tires, and they are shipping them out as well. So just speaking about Charlie and what is happening in Roosevelt, OK, population 241, the products they produce are going all over the world. The products

they use, such as the John Deere tractor and the Ford F-150 with the Goodyear or Michelin tires are American-made, but are dependent on trade from all around the world.

I could talk about Dr. Brent Hancock, born and raised in Kiowa County, OK. He left Kiowa County and went to the big city of Stillwater to attend Oklahoma State University, where he received his doctor of veterinary medicine degree. He returned back to Kiowa County and opened a veterinary clinic in Hobart in 1995. For over 20 years, Dr. Hancock has been taking care of vaccinations for sheep, cattle, pigs, goats, cats, and dogs. It is also rumored that Dr. Hancock can operate on your rabbit, but that is a whole different story.

He vaccinates these animals with vaccines to provide some of the safest agricultural products in the world. Some of those vaccines come from companies like Bayer, which is an international company based in Germany. He also uses products from Merck. They have offices in 50 countries, and they produce and ship their products to 140 countries around the world.

Again, we look at him and say that he is a good American veterinarian. He must be all American, but he actually depends on products from all over the world to provide basic things.

I cannot talk about Oklahoma without talking about oil and gas. Most of the pipe that goes down the hole in most of our wells is produced from steel that is not made in America. That particular type of steel that is down holding those wells is produced around the world but not here. We are dependent upon oil and gas that goes in the F-150 pickup and the John Deere tractor, and a part of it relies on steel from around the world.

I can take you to Tulsa, OK—slightly larger than Kiowa County, I would say—to a manufacturing plant called SWEP. They employ 100 people and produce components for refrigerators and air conditioners. They import products from Europe, and they combine them with products that they are making in the United States and assemble them. That final product is sold all over the country and is also sold to Canada and Mexico—all from one company in Tulsa, OK.

Drive up the road from Tulsa to Bartlesville to a manufacturing plant operated by ABB. They create a lot of products that are in wells, pipelines, and refineries all across America. That company imports products from suppliers from Canada and Mexico, and they create a final product that is sold all over the United States, and they sell it right back to Canada and Mexico as well.

This shouldn't be shocking to anyone. This is the same structure that we have had since the 1700s as Colonies. We produce some of our products and ship them out. We buy some to be able to use in manufacturing. This is a nation that is very interconnected to the

world, and it is exceptionally important that our trade agreements get resolved as fast as possible.

I want fair trade. We had unfair trade in 1773 that we protested in the Boston Harbor. We still want fair trade agreements right now, but those trade agreements need to be resolved as fast as possible. Farmers and ranchers in Oklahoma cannot wait a year to find out what is going to happen in our trade policy. Some of them are on the edge of the knife right now of bankruptcy. They can't get anything on the futures market to try to figure out what is happening in the now to be able to make the basic investments they need to make for this year's crops.

Predictability helps us, just like fair and free trade does. So while I understand full well that the administration is engaging in trade negotiations around the world, I encourage them to move from talking about these trade agreements to settling them—getting them resolved with Mexico and Canada and getting the best deal that we can have, resetting this agreement with NAFTA for another generation to prepare us for the future. Let's get that resolved. Those are our two largest trading partners. Resolve our trade agreement with Korea, locking that one in and finishing out all the area around Asia as well. Twelve of those nations have already resolved the trade agreements they are into, putting us behind. Those nations are forming contracts now. We need to engage as soon as we possibly can.

There are big issues with China and trade. They have not been fair in all their trade agreements. We need to resolve our issues with China, and I am pleased that this administration is leaning in to resolve a long-term issue with China trade. It is about time someone does it, but we also need to get it resolved. We don't need retaliatory tariffs moving across every industry in our Nation destabilizing what we are doing in the economy. Let's get these issues resolved.

Quite frankly, many of the trade issues that we have with the rest of the world aren't their tariffs, but they are our regulations. When our regulations and American redtape from our own government slow down our own economy, let's deal with our own house to make sure what we produce is competitive around the world, but in the meantime, let's move our trade conversations to trade agreements so we can continue to move on toward doing the same thing we have done since the 1700s as Americans; that is, trading with the entire world and leading the world with it.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The Senator from Alaska.

CHINA

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, as we all know, our country is facing a lot of challenges, particularly overseas, and a lot of them are in the news—Iran, Syria, North Korea. When you

look out across the landscape of what the big, long-term, geostrategic challenges are that face our Nation, in my view, there is no doubt that the No. 1 challenge economically and from a national security standpoint is the rise of China as a great power. We need to be thinking about that a lot more because that is going to be the issue our country faces, not just this year or next year but for decades.

I come from the great State of Alaska. We are an Asia-Pacific State. We are always looking to that region—as a matter of fact, we are in that region. My hometown of Anchorage is closer to Tokyo than it is to Washington, DC. What I see as a positive on this issue—having been someone in this body for a little over 3 years, I have come down to the floor and talked a lot about this challenge, the rise of China. It is a little concerning that a couple of years ago nobody was talking about it. Very few people were talking about it, but that is changing, and I think that is positive.

It is changing. This administration is focusing, and it is changing with my colleagues—Democrats and Republicans. Certainly, this is an area where, I think, there is a lot of agreement. I was just presiding for the last hour. The majority whip and the Senator from Oklahoma both were talking about issues dealing with China and trade and strategy, and that is positive.

The administration is talking about it. If you look at the national security strategy of the Trump administration, they are starting to focus on this issue. Front and center is the return of great power rivalries, with China as the leading, pacing threat and challenge, but it is also an opportunity for this great Nation of ours.

When you look at the history of our country, particularly post-World War II, the United States set up the international system—the international trading system and security system. We have been leading them, and so many countries—hundreds of millions of people in the world—benefited from that. The irony, of course, is that the one country that benefited probably more than almost anyone is China.

The rise of China was not only helped, but it was spurred by the American international trading system, the sealanes of commerce that we have kept open for decades. So there was a moment in the last couple of decades where we reached out very much—there was a great speech by our former Deputy Secretary of State in the Bush administration, a gentleman by the name of Bob Zoellick, who went on to become head of the World Bank. He asked in a speech to the Chinese: You need to now become a responsible stakeholder in this system that we created because you have benefited so dramatically. You are big, you are powerful, and now help become a stakeholder in the international order that we set up. Here is the offer to you.

Well, unfortunately, whether it is a Democrat or Republican, in the national security and foreign policy realm, most people are sensing that China has rejected that notion. No, we are not going to be a responsible stakeholder in your system. We are going to set up our own system. As a matter of fact, we might even try to undermine your system—the global system set up by the United States of America by Democrats and Republicans over decades.

You see it everywhere, whether it is decades-long theft of intellectual property, whether it is high tariffs, whether it is any American company coming into China and being forced to transfer their technology. No other countries do this to China, but they are doing it to our companies and have been doing that for decades.

So there is a rethinking right now. Clearly, the Trump administration is thinking about what the new strategy should be. The national security strategy of this administration, which I commend people to read—it is quite a good document, written by the outgoing National Security Advisor, H.R. McMaster—focuses a lot on this issue of reciprocity and great power rivalry again.

So as we are thinking about it, I would like to briefly touch on three principles I think will be key as we debate this. As we help formulate this—hopefully, in a bipartisan manner—this issue is going to be with us for decades. There are three key principles.

The first key principle is reciprocity—true reciprocity. The majority whip was just talking about this. The national security strategy of the Trump administration talks a lot about it. The President talks a lot about this. This is just a fairness issue. As I mentioned, there is IPR theft; high tariffs; the forced tech transfer from American companies to China; giant, subsidized, state-owned enterprises and state-backed investment funds buying up companies all over the world. No other country does that to China.

So when you look at the issue of reciprocity, I would like to break it down into a positive and negative. You have negative reciprocity. If we can't do that in your country, you shouldn't be able to do it in our country. It is pretty simple, pretty fair, and everybody understands that.

Then there is positive reciprocity. One thing I have been encouraging the Chinese to do for many years—and I have been over there a lot and spent a lot of time with senior leaders in that country. The United States has been going over and investing in China for decades. Factories have been rebuilt from the ground up and we have employed tens of thousands of Chinese with American capital. Well, you know what, China is getting big enough. They can do that in America. The Japanese did that in the 1980s. We had major trade disputes with them. What

did they do? They started coming to our country and investing in our States with their capital, greenfield investments—auto factories, for example—and employing tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of Americans. We would welcome that. As a matter of fact, in Alaska, the Chinese are talking about helping us develop a large-scale Alaska natural gas project. Greenfield investment, employing Alaskans would be positive if that is going to happen. So that is the way we need to think about reciprocity.

The second key principle is allies— allies, allies, allies. The United States is an ally-rich nation. Our adversaries and potential adversaries—think about whom that might be: Russia, North Korea, Iran, potentially China. They are ally-poor. No one wants to join the North Korea team or the Iran team—well, maybe Syria—but the United States for decades has had allies because they trust us. We are not a perfect nation, but they trust us. Look all over the world.

So what we need to do with regard to our strategy on China is make sure we remember not only our allies and deepen current relationships with Japan, with Korea, with Australia, but expand them—Vietnam. The Presiding Officer and I went to Vietnam with the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, a war hero who spent time in prison in Vietnam, Senator MCCAIN. The Vietnamese are very interested in doing more with us. India, there are incredible opportunities to have a deeper alliance between the oldest democracy in the world, us, and the biggest democracy in the world, them. So allies have to be a key part of our strategy as we look at how we deal with the rise of China for the next two or three or four or five decades because all of these countries—all of our allies—are having the same challenges.

Finally, the third principle we cannot lose sight of—and for too long this body lost sight of it—is robust American economic growth. Since the founding of our Nation, we have been growing at about 3 or 4 percent GDP growth. I have a chart, and I talk about it all the time down here. Yet, over the last decade, because of policies we inflicted on the American people, we were barely growing at 1-percent GDP growth. What does that mean? Everybody talks about numbers, wonky. That is a proxy for the American dream, and we were not growing. We weren't growing. In Asia, the coin of the realm of power more than anything—more than military power—is the power of your economy, and we have not had that. We have not shown up, and that matters.

What we are trying to do in this body now—tax reform, regulatory reform, unleashing American energy—is we are going to start growing this economy again, and that is going to help the American people, that is going to reignite the American dream, but that is going to be key with any policy we deal with China.

So as we are thinking through this challenge—and I am going to talk about this a lot, and I know all my colleagues are interested in this. I know my colleague from Michigan is interested in it—we need to continue to focus on these core principles—reciprocity, our allies, and robust economic growth as we all struggle with and put together a long-term strategy to deal with the rise of China, the challenges and the opportunities.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, our Nation's middle class was built by the hard work of American workers. At a time when our country has become increasingly polarized, we should all be able to agree that everybody should have a fair chance to succeed if they are willing to work hard and play by the rules.

These truly American values have inspired generations of workers who stand together and collectively bargain for basic workplace protections such as fair wages, safe workplaces, and reasonable hours. These protections allow American workers and their families to be productive members of the economy and achieve their version of the American dream, but the American dream only exists if hard work is rewarded with the opportunity to earn a good living, provide for your loved ones, and, when it is all said and done, be able to retire with dignity.

This is deeply personal to me. As a nurse's aide, my mother found opportunity and led the effort to organize her workplace. She went on to serve as an SEIU union steward.

Unfortunately, in the years since I grew up in Rochester Hills, it feels as though the American dream has moved out of the reach for too many American families. Joining or staying in the middle class can be a daily struggle.

We must fight every day to support and build the middle class, not chip away at fundamental worker rights. The laws, regulations, and administrative decisions that come out of Washington have a direct impact on American workers, unions, and the middle class.

The National Labor Relations Board plays a central role in protecting the rights of American workers. The NLRB was created to safeguard their ability to unionize and engage in collective bargaining for fair workplace conditions.

To work as intended, the NLRB must be made up of members deeply committed to representing the interests of American workers. Unfortunately, the nominee we will be considering shortly, Mr. John Ring, does not share this commitment. In fact, he is the third labor attorney President Trump has nominated to the committee with zero—let me say that again—zero track record of representing workers. He has only represented clients on the corporate and management side of labor issues.

During Mr. Ring's tenure at one of the country's largest firms, he advised corporations on how to undermine worker protections. He also posted blogs opposing commonsense reforms to modernize union election procedures, classifying the NLRB actions as "some of the biggest assaults on employer rights in recent history."

Mr. Ring would join recently confirmed Board member William Emanuel, who quickly ran into ethics trouble based on his history of representing corporations. Just 5 months after Mr. Emanuel's appointment, the NLRB was forced to vacate a major decision related to employer liability due to his conflicts of interest. Yet the administration continues full steam ahead with new nominees with extensive corporate ties and conflicts of interest.

This administration is also breaking precedent and all conception of fairness by refusing to nominate new NLRB members in bipartisan pairs. Despite a pending Democratic vacancy on the panel, the President and Senate majority leader have instead chosen a partisan approach—doubling down on the one-sided nature of a supposedly independent Federal agency. This is simply an unacceptable development, and it is an ongoing effort to silence our Nation's workers. Protecting American workers, the American middle class, and the American dream should not be a partisan issue.

I am deeply concerned with Mr. Ring's appointment to the NLRB. If confirmed to the five-member Board, the voting majority of an agency charged with protecting workers' voices will be stacked with members who are focused on undermining fundamental worker rights. I think employers should be treated fairly but not at the expense of our Nation's workers and the American middle class. We need a balanced and fair NLRB, and we need NLRB members who will stick up for American workers and the middle class. Mr. Ring will not be that kind of NLRB member. The administration and the majority are actively preventing seating someone who will stand up for workers.

I will be voting against Mr. Ring's confirmation, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all time is expired.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. 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 assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 67 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Alexander	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heller	Rounds
Cassidy	Hoehn	Rubio
Collins	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Corker	Inhofe	Scott
Cornyn	Isakson	Shelby
Cotton	Johnson	Sullivan
Crapo	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cruz	Lankford	Thune
Daines	Lee	Tillis
Enzi	McConnell	Toomey
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Murkowski	Young

NAYS—48

Baldwin	Hassan	Nelson
Bennet	Heinrich	Peters
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Reed
Booker	Hirono	Sanders
Brown	Jones	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Cardin	King	Shaheen
Carper	Klobuchar	Smith
Casey	Leahy	Stabenow
Coons	Manchin	Tester
Cortez Masto	Markey	Udall
Donnelly	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Durbin	Menendez	Warner
Feinstein	Merkley	Warren
Gillibrand	Murphy	Whitehouse
Harris	Murray	Wyden

NOT VOTING—2

Duckworth McCain

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.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Patrick Pizzella, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Labor.

Mitch McConnell, Richard Burr, Mike Crapo, John Thune, Pat Roberts, David Perdue, Michael B. Enzi, Lamar Alexander, John Boozman, Thom Tillis, Tim Scott, James M. Inhofe, John Hoeven, Mike Rounds, John Cornyn, John Barrasso, Jerry Moran.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Patrick Pizzella, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Labor, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 68 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Alexander	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heller	Rounds
Cassidy	Hoeven	Rubio
Collins	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Corker	Inhofe	Scott
Cornyn	Isakson	Shelby
Cotton	Johnson	Sullivan
Crapo	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cruz	Lankford	Thune
Daines	Lee	Tillis
Enzi	McConnell	Toomey
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Murkowski	Young

NAYS—48

Baldwin	Hassan	Nelson
Bennet	Heinrich	Peters
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Reed
Booker	Hirono	Sanders
Brown	Jones	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Cardin	King	Shaheen
Carper	Klobuchar	Smith
Casey	Leahy	Stabenow
Coons	Manchin	Tester
Cortez Masto	Markey	Udall
Donnelly	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Durbin	Menendez	Warner
Feinstein	Merkley	Warren
Gillibrand	Murphy	Whitehouse
Harris	Murray	Wyden

NOT VOTING—2

Duckworth	McCain
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 48.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Patrick Pizzella, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Labor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor as we, as Americans, continue to see the regular reminders that the world is a very dangerous place. The horrendous reports out of Syria over the weekend show us there are leaders in the world who will test the rules that define civilized nations. They will exploit any crack that they see in our resolve.

President Trump has consistently responded to these kinds of challenges by showing that he is resolute and that he is unshakable. He has a foreign policy

that always puts America first. To continue to do this, the President needs to have a full national security team on the job and working for America. The Secretary of State is a very important part of that team.

Tomorrow, the Foreign Relations Committee is scheduled to have a hearing on Mike Pompeo's nomination to do this very important job. Mike Pompeo understands that if we want safety and security at home, we need a world that is peaceful and stable. I expect he is going to talk about all of these things at the confirmation hearing, and I look forward to his testimony.

We have all heard about Mike Pompeo's impressive qualifications for the job to which he has been nominated—first in his class at West Point; Harvard Law School; a Member of Congress; and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. He has the integrity, and he has the experience to serve as America's Secretary of State. As a former Member of Congress, he certainly understands how policy decisions get made and the key importance of congressional oversight. As head of the CIA, he clearly understands the crucial role that the intelligence community plays in preserving America's national security. As a soldier, he understands the consequences of decisions that get made in Washington, DC.

I have traveled with Mike Pompeo to meet with world leaders and to attend national security conferences. He knows the issues, and he knows the people. He is the right person for this job. I met with him just last month after he was nominated. We talked about some of the specific issues going on around the world and how they affect our Nation's national security. It was a very good conversation, and I am extremely confident that he is the right person for this job.

I expect many more people will come away from these hearings tomorrow with great confidence in Mike Pompeo. He will be an excellent representative for our Nation, and he will be a strong hand to implement President Trump's foreign policy. So I look forward to voting on this nomination as soon as possible after the hearings.

It was just a little over a year ago that he was confirmed by a very large, bipartisan majority for his current job as the CIA Director. It was right here on this Senate floor where that confirmation occurred. Fifteen Senators from the other side of the aisle agreed that Mike Pompeo was the right choice for that position. As the nominee for the job he now holds, he drew bipartisan praise for his qualifications. Two Democratic Senators actually came to the floor and spoke in favor of his nomination—Senators FEINSTEIN and WARNER. They are the current vice chair of the Intelligence Committee and the former chair of the Intelligence Committee. Since that time, Mike Pompeo has done an excellent job at the CIA. Even Hillary Clinton has come out and

praised his time in heading that Agency.

I expect that this can be a short process to confirm him in the new job for which he has been nominated, that of Secretary of State. There is certainly no good reason for Democrats to slow things down or to attempt to slow things down.

We need to restore America to a position we once held as the most powerful and respected Nation on the face of the Earth. For 8 years, the previous administration had us going in the wrong direction. The Obama administration followed a policy that it called strategic patience. That meant watching while the Assad regime in Syria crossed one redline after another. Then the redline became a green light. The result is that Syria continues to use chemical weapons today in attacking its own people. Strategic patience did not work.

The Obama administration's policy also meant that North Korea was allowed to get away with too much for far too long. North Korea continued to test nuclear weapons, continued to test missiles, and continued to use hostages as a way of getting what it wanted from other countries. Strategic patience did not work with North Korea.

The Trump administration has said very clearly that the era of strategic patience is over. The leaders of these countries need to understand that their belligerence will not succeed. They need to get the clear message that America has a new foreign policy. It is a policy to secure America's national interests and demonstrate America's leadership around the world. Part of this leadership is to stand up to show that there is a limit to the patience of the civilized countries of the world. The previous administration too often placed international opinion ahead of what was actually best for America. That only made the world a more dangerous place. The Trump administration has begun to get us back on the right track, and Mike Pompeo will ensure that we stay on the right track.

When it comes to issues like the upcoming discussions with North Korea, Mike Pompeo understands the risks of dealing with these kinds of aggressive adversaries. He also understands the opportunities that we now have because of President Trump's forceful stand for American interests.

Democrats should commit to allowing this nomination to move as quickly as possible. We will have a hearing tomorrow. We need to have a thorough discussion about what is happening around the world, and then we need to vote. Let's not have any more of the deliberate delays that we have been seeing by the Democrats in this body—no more pointless and partisan obstruction.

America's adversaries around the world are watching closely—in Russia, in Syria, in North Korea, in Iran, and in other places. It is time for us to show that we are serious about maintaining a strong foreign policy that

puts America first. President Trump is doing his part. Mike Pompeo is ready to do his part in his job. It is now time for the Senate to do our job.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FAIR HOUSING ACT

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, 50 years ago today, Congress enacted the Fair Housing Act, exactly 1 week after the assassination of Martin Luther King as he fought for economic justice for sanitation workers in Memphis. It also came just weeks after the Kerner Commission issued its report on the origins of urban unrest in the 1960s. This report contained the now famous warning that “our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”

In the wake of these events, the Fair Housing Act made discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing illegal for the first time. For generations, redlining, restrictive covenants, and outright discrimination kept families of color locked out of entire neighborhoods, often far from where jobs were, and they created segregated communities that linger to this day. They denied these families the opportunity to build wealth through home ownership. Many of these exclusionary practices were carried out by private entities and local governments. But as Richard Rothstein reminds us in his new book, “The Color of Law”—and I recommend to everybody listening that they read that book—Federal policies also played a significant role in reinforcing segregation.

From 1934 through 1962—30 years, three decades—98 percent of all FHA mortgages went to White homeowners. In a country that in those days was about 10 percent African American, 98 percent of mortgages went to White homeowners. The Fair Housing Act made this despicable discrimination illegal. It required that Federal housing and urban development grants be administered in a way that would “affirmatively further” fair housing—not in a reactive way but in a way that would affirmatively further fair housing. State and local governments and public housing authorities were required to use their Federal funds in ways that would reverse, rather than accelerate or reinforce, segregation in their communities.

April 11, 1968, however, was not the end of our work to ensure fair housing and equal opportunities. Fifty years later, we haven’t had the progress we should have had, and so much more needs to be done.

A new report this year from the Center for Investigative Reporting analyzed tens of millions of mortgage records and found that all across the country people of color are far more likely—even holding constant for economic situations—to be turned down for a loan, taking into account factors like their income and the size of the loan. We know that the 2008 housing crisis hit communities of color particularly hard.

In the run-up to the crisis, faulty mortgages were targeted to people of color. Even those who qualified for a no-frills, no-surprises prime mortgage were often instead steered into a subprime, much riskier loan. Even African-American and Hispanic borrowers with higher incomes than other borrowers found themselves in risky, subprime, designed-to-fail products. These practices of discrimination stripped a generation’s worth of equity from communities that had fought hard for equal access to home ownership.

I know in my community in Cleveland, on the southeast side of Cleveland in the Broadway, Harvard area of that community, so much wealth has been lost. As people finally began to gain in home ownership and in wealth accumulation, what happened in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 devastated these communities. As a number of my colleagues have heard me say, in my ZIP Code of 44105, in Cleveland, OH, in the first half of 2007, there were more foreclosures than any ZIP Code in the United States of America.

The household wealth of communities of color still hasn’t recovered. My neighborhood hasn’t, my community hasn’t, and my State hasn’t. Middle-class Black and Hispanic families lost half their wealth from 2007 to 2013—half their wealth. Middle-income Black household wealth was \$63,000 in 2007. A decade later, it was \$38,000. The numbers are similar for Hispanic households—\$85,000 down to \$46,000.

Borrowers with these higher cost loans were foreclosed on at about triple the rate of borrowers with standard, 30-year, fixed-rate mortgages. Over a recent 8-year period, 9.3 million homeowners lost their homes through foreclosure, distress sales, or surrendering their home to the lender.

After the crisis, we took steps to fight this discrimination. We created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to look after bank customers and to help root out discrimination. We required lenders to report more detailed data so that we can more easily spot modern-day redlining.

In 2015, HUD also issued the affirmatively furthering fair housing rule. This rule would have given clearer guidelines to communities to help them assess their own fair housing needs and provided them with the data they needed to inform their decisions. It would have allowed them to set their own goals and timelines.

Some of the questions communities would ask during these assessments

would demand they think in new ways about how to create housing and economic opportunities for all of their residents—no matter their color, no matter family size, no matter their disability if they have one. These are the types of questions this body told the country to ask when it enacted the fair housing bill five decades ago.

But instead of recommitting ourselves to the promise we made 50 years ago, too many Washington politicians are trying to take us backward. Earlier this year, HUD suspended implementing the affirmatively furthering fair housing rule. That will not reverse the requirements of the Fair Housing Act. Instead, it hurts communities, which will once again be left to comply with the law without the technical assistance they need.

Remember that new data that banks were going to report to make it easier to spot lenders who discriminate? The bill the Senate passed last month right here would exempt 85 percent of banks from reporting the data they are collecting and reporting today. So we are not even going to know what happened. This body has scaled back the amount of data we are trying to gather to stop discrimination. Without it, we can’t monitor trends in mortgage lending. It will be harder to see who has access to affordable mortgage credit and, importantly, who does not have access.

HUD is even thinking about changing its mission statement in ways that diminish the importance of combating housing discrimination. The administration’s actions over the past year make it clear they are already wavering in that commitment. For example, in 2017, HUD withdrew guidance requiring equal access for transgender people in homeless shelters. Let’s pick on them even more. According to a report in the New York Times, Dr. Carson’s HUD has suspended several anti-discrimination investigations, including an investigation of discriminatory housing advertisements on Facebook. The administration proposed a 14-percent cut to the HUD budget, including affordable housing and community development programs aimed at creating housing and opportunity for low-income communities.

We know that one-fourth of renters in this country spend at least 50 percent of their income on housing. If one thing goes wrong in their lives, they are evicted or they lose their homes. One-fourth of people in this country who rent are paying at least half their income in housing costs. In Cuyahoga County, the second most populous county in Ohio, one-fourth of all family units, one-fourth of all residents, homeowners or renters, spend one-half of their income on housing, so it is not just renters, but it is often homeowners too.

We are deciding in this body because the President wants to—the far right in this body wants to cut spending on housing even more. We have enough money to do a huge tax cut for the

richest people in the country. The richest 1 percent will get 81 percent of that tax cut. I was talking to an accountant the other day in Elyria, OH. It is tax season, of course, and he is busy. He said: When people come and see me, they ask inevitably when I am doing their taxes “Well, how does this tax bill affect me?”

He asks: Are you a billionaire?

They laugh and say: Of course not.

He then says: Well, only if you are a billionaire will it affect you, and then you will save millions of dollars on your taxes.

That is a bit of an exaggeration, but that is what that tax bill is all about. So if you are a billionaire, if you are a decamillionaire, if you made a million dollars last year, you are going to save a whole lot on your taxes this year. But if you are living in working-class housing, if you can't afford much more than the very basic kind of housing or even worse than that, you are going to see your budget cut. You are going to see fewer vouchers. You are going to see less funding for housing.

What kind of government is this, this mean-spiritedness? There are more tax cuts for the richest in this country, but let's stick it to people who are barely making it. These are people who make \$10 to \$12 an hour. They make \$10 to \$12 an hour, and we are going to cut their Medicaid. They are making \$10 to \$12 an hour, and we are going to scale back their SNAP benefits. They are making \$10 to \$12 an hour, and we are going to undermine their housing subsidies. What is all of that about in this new government that we are living in now?

The last thing we ought to do at a time when a quarter of all renter households—400,000 families in my State of almost 12 million, 400,000 families pay half of their income in housing costs. Again, if one thing goes wrong, if their car breaks down going to work, could they come up with \$500 to fix their car? Probably not. Then what happens? Then they are evicted, and then everything goes upside down because they can't pay their rent, so they get evicted. The kid has to go to a new school district. They lose most of the things they have. They have to find a place to live. They probably don't have the money for the downpayment that a landlord charges.

A few years ago, I hosted a discussion with some of my colleagues and invited Matthew Desmond, the author of the book “Evicted.” In the front of the book, he scribbled the phrase “Home = Life.” If you don't have decent housing, it is pretty hard to put a stable life together for you and your family. One of the things he said in that book is that when you get your paycheck every 2 weeks or once a month, the rent eats first. You have to pay your rent. If you can't afford to pay your rent or you can barely afford to pay your rent, you can't do much else. That simple statement captures so much—a safe, stable home is the foundation for opportuni-

This government is going to give tax cuts to the richest people in the country, and we are pulling the rug out from under people who are working every bit as hard as we do in this body—and many of them work harder than we do—just trying to get along on \$8 or \$10 or \$12 an hour. We are denying people the opportunity of living in a safe, stable home. That is why we must redouble our commitment to fair housing. That is why we must take real, proactive steps.

My colleagues and I have legislation, the Fair and Equal Housing Act of 2017, that would add gender identity and sexual orientation to those protected from discrimination under the Fair Housing Act. Rather than take us backward, we must take these sorts of actions to give more Americans the opportunity to have a safe, stable home and to build wealth through home ownership. We must constantly work toward Dr. King's vision—killed 50 years ago this month—of equality and equal opportunity for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

NOMINATION OF ANDREW WHEELER

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about the nomination of Andrew Wheeler to be the Deputy Administrator of the EPA—an extremely important position.

Mr. Wheeler's expertise and experience make him extraordinarily qualified to become the Deputy Administrator. I am a little biased when it comes to Mr. Wheeler because he has great family roots in the State of West Virginia, which, to me, is a good recommendation in and of itself. I think his wealth of knowledge over the years working on environmental policy in the public and in the private sectors is just incredible. His knowledge and experience will be a tremendous asset to the Agency and to the American people. He understands—watching policy being made and helping policy being made himself but also then transitioning to the private sector and watching how that policy then influences the private sector as well. He has had an active hand in significant environmental—energy—and infrastructure policy achievements and debates and probably some of the failures that we have had, as well as the confirmation of numerous Presidential nominees. So Andrew will have a head start. He will hit the ground running, and that is what we need at the EPA.

Andrew was also tasked with coordinating and working with the various agencies within the committee's jurisdiction. Most importantly, he has been and was tasked with this, so he worked with other agencies while he was a staffer.

Beginning in 2009, Mr. Wheeler went into the private sector, continuing his work in environmental and energy policy. Throughout his career, he has worked with individuals and stake-

holders who run the political gamut, and he has left a very positive impression on them.

During his confirmation hearing in our EPW Committee, he was very forthright in his answers, very willing to look deeper into certain areas, and very willing to not express an opinion if he didn't really know or was unsure of some of the details. Actually, I think he exhibited a real curiosity as to how he could make the EPA run smoother and better and be more reflective of what the President and we here in the Senate and people across this country see as a vision for the EPA.

I have also been impressed by the number of individuals who know Mr. Wheeler and who have come forward and spoken about his expertise and his willingness to collaborate on issues all across the country. He has had an active role in my State of West Virginia, which is a high energy-producing State.

I urge my colleagues to vote to confirm Mr. Wheeler. They will have no regret. I look forward to working with him at the EPA on issues that are important to my State of West Virginia and across the country.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

TAX REFORM AND GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, over the last couple of weeks, many of us have had an opportunity to spend more time at home than we do just going back and forth a few days a week.

While I was there, I had the opportunity to talk to small business owners, employees—people who are seeing their paychecks for the first time reflecting what we have done with the tax bill. Both in my hometown of Springfield, MO, and around our State, I also heard a level of optimism that was very encouraging.

One of the people I talked to was on the national board of manufacturers. A recent poll of the manufacturers looking at their confidence level reflected that it was the highest it has ever been in all of the time they have been polling on how they see the future.

Mr. President, where you and I live, in an economy that makes things and grows things, we always do better. We are a productive part of the country. We don't do quite as well in an advice economy, but we are not opposed to an advice-giving economy. We have people who give advice. But, frankly, if you put that on top of truly productive capacity and a marketplace that meets that capacity, we always do very well.

As I talked to people, I heard consistently two reasons that people feel their optimism is justified and understandably growing. One reason is the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. No matter what was said about the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, people who were told it wouldn't help them are finding out, when they get their first paychecks, that it is helping them. People who were told that the

investment opportunities that would encourage them to grow their small businesses wouldn't be there for them are finding out that they are there for them, and they see those things coming. The economy is generally seeing money stay where we live that otherwise would have gone to Washington, DC. Forty-three different entities have come to our offices with ideas about what they are doing.

The 53,000 State employees in our State—the payroll deduction would indicate that this year, \$32½ million from just that group of employees that was sent to Washington, DC, last year—it will stay in Missouri this year.

I mentioned on the floor not too long ago that one of our counties had reported that their county payroll—that the average county employee would take home \$1,800 more this year, with the same paycheck to start with. That is beyond what they would have taken home last year. For all of those county employees put together, in Boone County, MO, it would mean that \$946,000 will stay in Boone County that previously would have gone to Washington, DC. That makes a difference in the economy of the county because there are a lot of other people beyond those 485 employees who see the same kinds of things happening to them, but it really makes a difference for families. That take-home pay difference that some people here in the Senate and other places in this building would suggest won't matter to families—it turns out it matters a lot. And I will say again that it particularly matters a lot if you don't have it. If you have all kinds of money, it is easy to say: Well, \$200 a month—what difference does that make? Let me assure you, it makes a difference if you don't have it. Lots of families and individuals are beginning to see the ability to do more things with their own money.

The second thing I consistently heard about was just the difference in the regulation atmosphere. Earlier this week, a dozen Federal agencies came together in an effort to improve the environmental review process to allow infrastructure projects to go on more quickly—not only to diminish the time it takes to get a project started but also to be able to, with more certainty, go out and start the process of bidding and acquiring and the things you need to do to make that happen.

There were a dozen Federal agencies working together with a common purpose, asking: What can we do to make this system work better? We have had up to 29 statutes and 5 Executive orders that resulted in a number of different decisions under Federal law that allow those projects to move forward more quickly.

We had a discussion in the Commerce Committee this morning with one of the nominees for the Surface Transportation Board who had been instrumental in helping put together a more streamlined way to get things done if, for instance, you were putting some-

thing back exactly where it had been. It makes sense to everybody in America that if you are building a bridge where there was a bridge, it should take less of an environmental impact study than if you are building a bridge where there has never been a bridge before. But until right now, those two things were not treated in a significantly different way; they were treated in the same way. Now, because of legislation that we passed and the President signed, they will be treated in a different way, as they should have been.

Location is a great advantage to our whole country. Again, in the middle of the country, where I live, I have seen—I think it may be our greatest competitive advantage—access not only to the national marketplace but to the world marketplace. Generally, we have the same things in America. Things that allow us to put infrastructure in place more readily and make it more affordable to get it done in a quicker way are all good things.

This week, one of the nominees we will be voting on is the Deputy Administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency. Over the last decade, based on their own estimate, the Environmental Protection Agency imposed somewhere between \$43 and \$51 billion in regulatory costs annually. You have to be an incredibly strong economy to absorb another \$50 billion in regulatory costs from one agency. And that is their estimate; you could get other estimates that say: Oh, no, it is going to be a lot more costly than that. These are the costs they are willing to admit to.

The current administration has turned the page. I hope that the new Deputy Administrator becomes an active part of that. I think the EPA has been on the forefront of really looking at the kinds of things that are holding back the economy and trying to do things that make sense.

The EPA Administrator, Administrator Pruitt, quickly got on the job of dismantling two of the most costly and burdensome regulations that may have ever been proposed by any Federal agency. One is the waters of the United States, where the EPA decided that virtually all of the water in the country was somehow related to navigable water. Some of it might eventually run into navigable water, but the law says that the EPA has the authority to regulate navigable water.

The EPA said: Oh, no, that means any water that could ever run into any water that could ever run into any water that could ever run into navigable water.

In our State, that meant that 99.7 percent of the State would have been under the EPA authority, if they wanted to exercise it, for things that would have slowed down the economy, made it harder to resurface your driveway or dig a utility pole or put fertilizer on your field or get a building permit.

It was a ridiculous proposal, and Administrator Pruitt and the EPA under-

stood that it is ridiculous—just as, by the way, the courts did. The reason this had not gone into effect yet is largely because the courts basically said to the EPA, in many instances: You don't have the authority to do that. This change was made because the EPA realized that they didn't have the authority. Frankly, if they did have the authority, it would have been a bad idea.

There was a power plan that would have been so excessive that, in the State where I live, the utility bill would have doubled in about 10 or 12 years—a power plan that would have added up to \$39 billion in compliance costs, every single penny of which would have been passed along in your utility bill and mine, all of it added to the utility bill in ways that just, frankly, didn't make sense.

The EPA has moved away from that but not away from the idea of regulation or environmental control. In fact, Administrator Pruitt came to the Thomas Hill Energy Center in our State in April of last year to hear directly from workers, from the electric co-op members that provide electricity to many of our rural residents, and from ag leaders about the impact of that. He listened to that and went back—I am sure he did that in other places—and withdrew that rule but at the same time proposed a solution for West Lake Landfill, which has been on the critical “we need to take care of this” list for 30 years.

The job of the EPA is not to strangle the economy. The job of the EPA is to make the environment more protected by doing the things that the EPA was designed to do. I think that is what they have been doing—looking at the rules that don't make sense, trying to be sure that we don't do things at the Federal level that cost people their jobs, their livelihood, and their opportunities for no reason at all.

I had a meeting this week—it was Friday a week ago—at the Missouri State University, where the head of the Missouri Department of Agriculture, Chris Chinn, and the Missouri Farm Bureau president, Blake Hurst, and I answered questions for about 45 minutes from a crowd there to talk about agriculture and the future of agriculture. Not a single question was asked about the farm bill. The questions were basically about trade, rural broadband, and regulation. I think you could go to lots of other places and say: What do you want to talk about that you are most concerned about with the Federal Government, and two or three of those topics would come up again.

Last year the Senate used the Congressional Review Act to block 15 new major rules that had come up late in the previous administration. That act had been used exactly one time since it was put into law, in 1995 or 1996. It had been used exactly one time during the entire life of the law until we were able to look at it and use it 15 times last year to eliminate rules that would

have cost our economy \$36 billion in compliance costs. They were not rules that we had before. In the case of the last administration, the country had gone along without these rules even being proposed for 7½ years but, suddenly, on the way out the door, there were all these new things that would have held the economy back in a way that, frankly, nobody would want to have to do if they were still there to take responsibility for it. So we are looking at what we can do in regulation, looking at what we can do in transportation, looking at what we can do to make us more competitive and allow things to happen so the taxpayers have the benefit of a process that works for them instead of a process that works with them.

Rolling back unnecessary redtape isn't just important for infrastructure. It isn't just important for individuals. It is also important for strengthening our economy. I think we are seeing that happen. These people who are willing to serve, like some of the individuals we will be voting on this week, are people who are willing to give of themselves and their time, their effort, and their energy to work for the citizens of our country. We should be grateful to them, but we should also be sure that we are watching carefully to be sure that they continue to do the kinds of things that create opportunity and competition.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mr. TOOMEY assumed the Chair.)

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

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, it was about 2 weeks ago that I had the opportunity to tour a steel plant in Redding, PA. The plant is owned by Carpenter Technology. It is a company that was founded in 1889. It is quite extraordinary. It is a vast complex in Redding, PA. They have 2,000 employees in Berks County, which is where Redding is located, and they have an additional 1,200 or so folks throughout other parts of Pennsylvania.

Carpenter Technology is a leading producer and distributor of specialty metals, including what they call soft magnetics. As I understand it, soft magnetics increase the efficiency and the power and the battery life of electric motors. That is one of the main applications of these soft magnetics. It is a feature in steel and other metals that allows the magnetic properties to be turned on and off very rapidly. It is an amazing technology. It is an absolutely essential component for all kinds of products, including aircrafts, electric cars, even medical devices. It

is quite a range of products. One of the things I learned, of the many things I learned while I was at Carpenter Technology, is that tax reform is working for Carpenter Technology.

While I was there, the CEO announced a \$100 million investment, right there in Redding, Berks County, PA, to upgrade their capabilities and their capacity to produce these soft magnetics. To be more precise, they are buying an entire new hot rolling steel mill in Redding, PA. It is a \$100 million investment in a new mill that will allow them to expand their output and meet increasing demand for this really fascinating product that they make.

One of the things the leadership of Carpenter Technology made abundantly clear in their press release and in their public statements was that they were able to purchase this mill and make this \$100 million investment in their company now because of the tax reform we passed. This is exactly the type of capital investment we envisioned when we passed the tax reform bill. It was exactly for this kind of economic activity and expansion that we wanted to lower the cost of deploying this capital and expanding business and generate the economic growth and prosperity that comes with this.

By the way, Carpenter Technology is not an outlier. This kind of investment is consistent with the sentiment we are seeing all across the country.

Just at the end of the first quarter—the quarter that just ended—there was a large survey of American chief financial officers—CFOs—across the country. It was carried out by Deloitte LLP. It was exploring the question of growth expectations for capital expenditure. The fact is, their conclusion is that these CFOs anticipate greater growth and more hiring. In fact, the sentiment is at a multiyear high. Why is that? Here is what Deloitte had to say about it:

Clearly, there's a high desire for investment in the U.S., and that is coming from just the structure of tax reform. [CFOs] are expecting higher domestic wages, almost 40 percent are anticipating and planning for higher and front-loaded capital investments, and about a third higher research and development. What they've said is because of tax reform they're going to take those actions.

It is very straightforward. It is very clear.

So here we are, just 3½ months since passage, and the tax bill has already and continues to benefit workers and businesses, and, boy, these are not the crumbs some of our friends on the other side of the aisle have tried to suggest they are. There are over 500 businesses that we know of—businesses that are sufficiently high profile that we have read about and we can track their announcements. These 500-plus businesses employ over 4 million workers. Over 4 million workers across America have already received bonuses, wage increases, enhanced benefits, and increased contributions to their pension plans. It has already hap-

pened, and it is attributable entirely to the tax reform. So the benefits from this tax reform are clearly already flowing to the very workers we intended to benefit from it.

So my friends on the other side have had some struggles in thinking about how they can disparage this tax reform. They have come to realize that calling \$1,000 bonuses and multi-thousand-dollar pay raises crumbs is probably not such a good idea. So they have shifted the argument to be a kind of class warfare argument.

I hear two varieties of this most frequently. One is this idea that, well, the benefits all flow to the rich. The second is this idea that, well, these are greedy corporations that get this tax savings, and they just use the money to buy stock back.

Let's unpack this a little bit. What about this argument that it all flows to the rich? Well, there is one problem with that argument. That problem is it is not true; it is not true at all because when we did this tax reform, we did it in a way that makes the Tax Code more progressive. What does that mean? That means that upper income Americans—the wealthiest Americans—have an increased percentage of the total tax burden. So while everybody gets a savings in percentage terms, the savings disproportionately go to lower and middle-income workers and a disproportionately small amount of the savings go to upper income workers. So when the dust clears, the net effect is wealthier people are paying a larger percentage of the total tax bill than they paid beforehand.

So, clearly, the benefits of this tax reform are flowing to everyone and disproportionately to low- and middle-income people.

What about this idea that stock buybacks are such a terrible thing? There have been some stock buybacks. What does that mean? That means companies have taken the additional pretax cash flow they have, and they have decided in some cases that they will take a portion of it and return it to the owners of the company.

It just so happens that about 40 percent of the owners of the public companies in America are the people who have saved in their retirement plans—401(k) plans, IRA savings accounts, 529 plans, defined benefit pension plans. These are middle-income Americans whose savings are invested in the stocks of companies.

In some cases, yes, there have been stock buybacks. That means these savers have had cash introduced into their accounts, which then can be deployed by the managers of these accounts into new investments, which is what happens for anyone who is selling their stock in response to a buyback. They get cash.

What do they do with that cash? They get the chance to reassess where they invest their money, making new

investments, making different investments, reallocating capital, and shifting capital to where there is the greatest demand for it. This is exactly the way a free enterprise system should work. This is exactly the mechanism that allows capital to flow to its highest use and helps to encourage still more economic growth.

Better still, this is just the beginning. We are only 3½ months into this. We haven't yet even begun to reap the benefits—as a country, as a society—of this reformed Tax Code. Businesses are already responding to the incentives, and with the lower after-tax cost of capital we have created, we are seeing increased investment. Whether it is a tractor or a new factory or a piece of machinery or a steel mill in Redding, PA, that investment invariably requires workers to produce that investment, so there is greater job security and more opportunities for those workers. But then the company that actually deploys that investment, such as Carpenter Technology in the case I just mentioned—their workers become more productive; their workers have new tools that allow them to command higher wages and a better standard of living. That is what is happening, and that is going to continue to develop as companies are just now beginning to have the opportunity to deploy that capital only 3½ months into this new tax regime.

I am just delighted that every week that goes by, I learn about more Pennsylvania workers and more American workers who are working for businesses that are benefiting and enhancing their investments. It is a really good-news story.

Now I will shift a little bit to the CBO report that came out earlier this week, which said a few things worth noting. One should be on all of our radars, and that is the fiscal challenge we face. We have too much debt, and that number is growing too rapidly.

This fiscal year, the gross amount of Federal debt is \$21 trillion. By the end of this 10-year window, CBO contemplates that number will go up to \$33 trillion. This is a huge problem. But I think it is important that we stress where this problem comes from. This is a spending problem; this is not a revenue problem, and we can see this in CBO numbers.

In June of last year, almost a year ago, CBO projected that over the 10-year window they were considering at the time, we would have \$43 trillion of tax revenues flowing into the Federal Government, with \$53 trillion of spending—a net deficit over that period of \$10 trillion.

One year later, CBO has updated its projections, and now it is calling for \$44 trillion in revenue over the current 10-year window. So there will be \$1 trillion more in revenue, but \$56 trillion in spending—\$3 trillion more in spending. So we go from a 10-year window that looks as though the CBO is projecting a \$10 trillion deficit to a \$12 trillion

deficit. Clearly the deficit is growing, and clearly it is driven by the increase in spending.

The bottom line is, whether it is \$10 trillion or \$12 trillion, this deficit is way too big. But tax reform is going to enhance the revenue collected by the Federal Government by helping us create a larger economy to tax. The spending is our fault. That is something we have to get under control.

CBO has observed a couple of other things. They talk about our tax reform, and they talk about terrific things. They say in the report that the tax reform results in “higher levels of investment, employment, and GDP.” We can see dramatically different projections of economic growth post-tax reform, according to the CBO, than we had pre-tax reform, according to the CBO.

In January of 2017, they projected that this year the economy would grow 2 percent. But after tax reform passed, they reassessed this year. They took the projection of 2 percent for this year, and they said that now it will grow 3 percent based on tax reform. That is a 50-percent increase in the growth of our economy. That is huge.

For next year, 2019, they were projecting 1.7 percent growth. Now, post-tax reform, they are estimating 2.9 percent growth—1.2 percentage points—again, an almost 50-percent increase. These are huge increases, and they explain it. They say: “The largest effects on GDP over the decade stem from the tax act . . . boost[ing] the level of real GDP by an average of 0.7 percent . . . over the 2018–2028 period.”

The fact is, this tax bill is already working. It is making the structural changes in the Tax Code that create a greater incentive for businesses to invest. It is making American companies and American workers more competitive than we have been in a very, very long time. It is going to increase the capital stock, the invested assets in our businesses that allow our workers to become more productive, and it is going to continue to allow those more productive workers to earn higher wages.

Let's be honest. No one can prove with certainty what the future holds, so it is worth looking at what is happening in the present. As a result of our tax reform, what is happening today, what is happening in the present is this: Millions of Americans have been receiving bonuses; millions of Americans have been receiving pay raises; millions of Americans have seen increases in their pension contributions; millions of Americans have seen an increase in the value of their pensions; and millions of Americans—like the workers at Carpenter Technology—have seen greater job security and greater opportunity as their employers are investing in their companies, and that is already beneficial for all of us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as my colleague from Pennsylvania has pointed out, the recently passed tax bill is already having a profound impact on the economy, and, as the Congressional Budget Office report points out, over the course of the next decade, it will significantly increase economic growth in the economy and increase the number of jobs. It said that over 1 million jobs would be created as a result of the passage of the tax bill.

To his point, as well, they talk about deficits and debt projected out into the future, which clearly are major issues but, again, I would point out, are a result of the rate of growth in spending and not of the impact of the revenues generated by lowering taxes because when you get greater growth in the economy, it means that more people are taking realizations and more people are paying taxes. The Congressional Budget Office, as a rule of thumb, suggests that for each percentage—a 1-percent increase in growth of the economy—you get about \$3 trillion in additional revenue over the course of a decade.

If we assume, and I believe we will—even the CBO, which I think is very conservative in terms of growth estimates, suggests that there is higher growth attributable largely to the changes we made in the Tax Code, reducing taxes on families in this country and reducing taxes on our small businesses, which incentivize them to expand and grow their operations and, therefore, create better paying jobs and higher wages, but also will generate more revenue coming in to the Federal coffers.

Clearly, the issue that we have in terms of the debt picture in the long term is not about revenue; it is about spending, which is growing dramatically over that next decade, particularly in what we refer to as mandatory spending or entitlement programs. This cries out, I would argue, for reforms in entitlement programs. But to say that somehow tax reform is contributing to that is a far cry from the truth, and I think the Congressional Budget Office numbers bear that out. Again, I would argue that in terms of what they suggest we are going to see in growth as a result of the changes we made in the Tax Code, I believe it is going to be dramatically understated.

When it came time to draft tax reform, Republicans really had two goals in mind. First, we wanted to put more money in the pockets of hard-working Americans, and we wanted to do that right away. Second, we wanted to create the kind of economy that would give Americans access to economic security for the long term.

Less than 4 months after we passed this bill, I am proud to report that the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act has already achieved the first goal and is well on its way to achieving the second.

To put more money in Americans' pockets, we lowered tax rates across the board for American families, nearly doubled the standard deduction, and

increased the child tax credit to \$2,000, doubling the amount that families can deduct per child in terms of the child tax credit.

In February, that relief started to show up in Americans' paychecks. According to Treasury Department estimates, 90 percent of the American people are seeing bigger paychecks this year, thanks to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. And thanks to the IRS's new withholding calculator, families with children can adjust their withholding to take into account the individual tax relief provided in the new tax law, in particular, the increased child tax credit. That means even more in the paychecks of hard-working Americans without their having to wait until they file their 2018 tax returns next year.

When it came to our second goal, we knew that the only way to give Americans access to real long-term economic security was to ensure they had access to good jobs, good wages, and real opportunities. We knew that the only way to guarantee access to good jobs, wages, and opportunities was to make sure businesses had the ability to create them.

Before the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, our Tax Code wasn't helping businesses to create jobs or to increase opportunities for workers. In fact, it was doing the exact opposite. Large and small businesses were weighed down by high tax rates and growth-killing tax provisions, and all the regulatory and compliance burdens that came along with them.

Our outdated international tax rules left America's global businesses at a competitive disadvantage in the global economy. That had real consequences for American workers. A small business owner struggling to afford the annual tax bill for their business was highly unlikely to be able to hire a new worker or to raise wages. A larger business struggling to stay competitive in the global marketplace while paying substantially higher tax rates than its foreign competitors too often had limited funds to expand or increase its investment here in the United States.

When it came time for tax reform, we set out to improve the playing field for American workers by improving the playing field for businesses as well. To accomplish that, we lowered tax rates across the board for owners of small and medium-sized businesses, farms, and ranches. We lowered our Nation's massive corporate tax rate, which until January 1, was the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. We expanded business owners' ability to recover investments they make in their businesses, which will free up cash that they can reinvest in their operations and their workers. We brought the U.S. international tax system into the 21st century by replacing our outdated territorial system with a modernized territorial tax system so that American businesses are not operating at a disadvantage next to their foreign competitors.

The goal in all of this was to free up businesses to increase investments in the U.S. economy, hire new workers, and increase wages and benefits. I am happy to report that this is exactly what they are doing. Since tax reform became the law of the land, we have seen a steady drumbeat of businesses announcing good news for American workers. So far, more than 500 companies, and counting, have announced pay raises, bonuses, 401(k) match increases and other benefits, business expansions, and utility rate cuts: Starbucks, McDonald's, Jergens, McCormac & Company, Apple, Best Buy, Walmart, Bank of America, ExxonMobil, Hormel Foods, UPS, and American Express. And the list goes on and on.

I don't need to tell anyone that Americans had a tough time during the last administration or that our economy had stagnated. But under Republican leadership, we are finally starting to see the economy turn around, and tax reform is playing a very big part. Unfortunately, Democrats seem unable to accept the fact that tax reform is benefiting middle-class Americans. In fact, Democrats recently introduced an infrastructure plan that they want to pay for by repealing features of the tax law that are producing so many new benefits for American workers.

Republicans wanted Democrats to join us in the process of drafting tax reform. After all, a lot of the provisions in the final bill were the result of years of work by Republicans and Democrats. I was a part of that process. We had working groups that spent a good amount of time looking at every element and feature of the Tax Code—bipartisan groups of Republicans and Democrats, working together, making recommendations about things that we could do to reform our Tax Code in a way that would incentivize greater growth and expansion and better jobs and higher wages.

Democrats had previously expressed their support for things that became key parts of the bill, like lowering our Nation's massive corporate tax rate. Unfortunately, instead of working with us, Democrats chose to play politics. Apparently, it was more important to them to attempt to score political points against Republicans than to work on a bill that they knew had the potential to help the American people. Almost 4 months after the bill's passage, they are still playing politics, despite the fact that in the face of the bill's success, their attempts to criticize it are sounding pretty desperate.

Take their attempt to portray the bill's benefits for workers as "crumbs." Let me tell you that a worker whose salary just increased by \$3 an hour does not see that additional \$500 a month as crumbs, especially when you combine it with the rest of the tax relief in the new tax law. A worker who gets an increased match in her 401(k) account will see her retirement savings increase significantly as a result of the

Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and she will not see that benefit as crumbs.

It is too bad that Democrats can't accept the fact that the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is working. At the very least, they should stop trying to undo the benefits that it is bringing to the American people. Over 500 companies across this country have announced increases in wages, increases in benefits, and bonuses—direct benefits to American workers, to the tune of over 5 million Americans who already have benefited from this. That is the short-term impact that we have seen already.

The American people spent long enough in a stagnant economy. It is time to get this economy jump-started and to see those wages and those good-paying jobs come back into this economy so that American families can benefit, can experience, and can enjoy a better standard of living, a higher quality of life, an opportunity to do more for their children, to help them with their college education, to set aside a little bit for retirement, and to take care of those day-to-day bills.

Fifty percent of the American people, according to polls, say they are living paycheck to paycheck. One thing we can do to help them is to make that paycheck bigger and, hopefully, to put them in a position where they can put aside a little bit for retirement and where, maybe, they can help save up for their kids' college education, and maybe take a vacation with the family.

There are so many ways in which the benefits of this bill are delivered to the American people and to American families and can help them in their daily lives. We shouldn't try and go back. We ought to try to go forward and recognize that the near-term benefits of this bill are very real to American workers. The long-term benefits are going to be, I think, even more beneficial to American workers, to American businesses, and to American families because not only now will they benefit from the lower tax rates that are delivered to the entire tax table, but they are also benefiting from the doubling of the standard deduction, the doubling of the child tax credit, and all the other benefits that are included in this bill. American businesses, small and large, are also seeing those benefits on a daily basis, so much so that they have already made these commitments to over 5 million Americans. That is 500 companies that are paying out bonuses, higher pay, and bigger benefits for their workers. That is only going to increase over time as this economy starts to take off because they now have an incentive to expand and grow their operations through reduced rates, when it comes both to large and small businesses, through the ability to recover their costs more quickly and to free up that capital with which they can invest in and expand and grow this economy and create those better paying jobs.

This is a win-win for the American people. It is a win-win for our country.

I hope our colleagues on the other side of the aisle will quit referring to it as “crumbs” because I know the American people don’t see it that way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to oppose in the strongest terms the nomination of Patrick Pizzella as Deputy Secretary of Labor.

With this nomination President Trump is once again breaking his promise to put workers first. Mr. Pizzella has a record that is time and again at odds with the goals of the very Department he would help to lead as Deputy Secretary. His track record is one of not merely failing workers but of failing to enforce laws to protect the health and safety of workers, seeking to diminish workers’ rights and protections, and undermining the unions that represent and fight for them.

In fact, his record includes working with convicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff on behalf of causes that are counter to the mission of the Department of Labor.

In the 1990s, Congress was moving to expand labor and immigration protections to the Northern Marianas Islands, a U.S. Territory, to end the operation of sweatshops that did not follow Federal labor laws. The law at the time let companies bring in foreign workers to toil under inhumane conditions. The workers were underpaid. They were forced to sign contracts signing away their rights to protest labor conditions, and some were even coerced to have abortions.

The companies operating under these inhumane conditions were able to print the words “Made in the U.S.A.” on their products.

While Congress was looking to take action to change the law so we could better protect workers, Pizzella was working with Abramoff to coordinate all-expense-paid trips for dozens of Republican lawmakers and staff and seeking to maintain the sweatshop status quo.

Patrick Pizzella chose not to work for workers but for corporations. These efforts are not just counter to the mission of the Department of Labor, they are counter to our national values.

The rest of Mr. Pizzella’s record shows that he has taken equally extreme positions throughout his career. Take, for example, his radical record as the sole employee of the Conservative Action Project, a far-right group funded by billionaire donors like the DeVos family, or his record when he last served in the Department of Labor. Under his leadership, the Department

of Labor cut its budget in part by cutting down its own employees’ collective bargaining rights and decreasing official time.

Then there is his long record championing anti-union policies and arguing to limit collective bargaining rights.

At the Federal Labor Relations Authority, Pizzella not only ruled consistently against workers and unions, but he repeatedly broke with longstanding policy by calling out the names of individual workers in his decisions. He chose to call out defendants by name and put them in the public spotlight. The pattern of Mr. Pizzella’s anti-worker ideology is clearly unchanged today. Throughout his career, Mr. Pizzella’s record has been alarmingly consistent. From his years serving as the right hand to Jack Abramoff until now, he has shown that he is not going to fight for workers. He will fight against them.

It would be irresponsible to put a man with such a strong track record of anti-worker conviction a tweet away from leading the Department of Labor. It is unconscionable that someone of Mr. Pizzella’s background would be the No. 2 leader at the Department of Labor. It is unacceptable that he could be in line to serve as Acting Secretary should Secretary Acosta leave the Department.

I strongly oppose his nomination. I will be voting against him, and I encourage our colleagues to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

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

OPIOID CRISIS

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, over the past couple of weeks Congress and the Senate had its State work period, and during that time we go back to our State and travel, listening to our constituents. I had the incredible opportunity to go to Colorado and spend time on the Front Range, on the I-25 Corridor, where the vast majority of the population of Colorado lives, and also spent some time in Western Colorado, which most people identify as being where they travel to Colorado, with the ski resorts, mountains, Rocky Mountain National Park, and the Great Sand Dunes National Park.

I also had a chance to visit some of the smaller communities in Southern Colorado, including an area known as the San Luis Valley, where some of the longest living Colorado families have farms. There are families and businesses.

The focus of this visit was about how we grow the economy in the San Luis Valley, the Eastern Plains, and the Western Slope—areas that haven’t seen as much economic growth as, perhaps, Denver, Fort Collins, or Colorado Springs.

I also wanted to spend some time getting into the community and talking about a couple of the issues they face when it comes to the opioid crisis that this country faces. Over the past sev-

eral years, a great deal of attention has been paid to prescription drug addiction and to prescription drug overdoses.

My home State of Colorado actually has an average that exceeds the national average when it comes to prescription addiction and overdose. We are losing a person in Colorado to drug overdose every 36 hours—far too many people. In our rural communities, it is not just the wealthy who are immune or the poor who are immune or the wealthy who are affected or the wealthy who are affected. It is everyone—wealthy, poor, low- and high-income. The opioid crisis and prescription drug addiction have affected every nook and cranny of our communities.

The attention that has been paid to the addiction crisis in this country has resulted in some of the greatest bipartisan achievements Congress has had over the past several years. The passage of the 21st Century Cures Act will expedite new treatment methods through the FDA and provide research treatment dollars for the opioid crisis and the prescription drug crisis and addiction.

It also led to passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, legislation that had great bipartisan support. People on both sides of the aisle worked on this legislation together to pass a bill to address what is happening to our communities.

Every single one of us has a story about somebody close to us, near to us, perhaps a friend or relative—probably both—who has fallen victim to prescription drug addiction and opioid addiction. Of course if you end up with a prescription drug addiction, that one pill might be \$60 or \$80, but you can go out on the streets and find heroin for \$10 to \$15. Now we see the rise of heroin replacing prescription drugs and you see the cycle. The drug dealers have figured out a way to lace cocaine with fentanyl so that it becomes a little bit more addictive and so people are hooked on cocaine more than they already are.

You know the dangers of fentanyl, a synthetic drug so powerful that you can’t have a dog sniff for it at the Post Office because it would kill the animal.

During these roundtables that were held in the San Luis Valley about opioids, I learned a couple of things. In Alamosa, CO, I learned that about 90 percent of the jail population in Alamosa is addicted to drugs. At the same roundtable, we talked about the challenges that rural communities have in treatment. We know that if a police officer or law enforcement officer or paramedic finds somebody who is overdosed and they are revived with Narcan, yes, you saved their life. You brought them back, but what happens after that? They are left to their own devices. Do they return to that abuse? Do they return to that cycle of overdose? Without treatment, yes, they will.

We learned in Swedish Medical Center Englewood, CO, the Front Range

suburb of Denver, that 1 out of every 10 visitors to the emergency room of people who are revived by Narcan or some other treatment after an overdose will be dead within a year. So 1 out of 10 who come into an emergency room will be dead within a year.

We know that there has been great success in finding alternatives to opioid medication. In fact, Colorado emergency rooms and the Colorado Hospital Association, working together with a number of hospitals, developed a program called Alternatives to Opioids, or ALTO, which is a program that we actually introduced legislation on—Senator BOOKER, myself, Senator BENNET, and others—to try to make sure that emergency rooms don't just turn to opioid medication but find other alternatives because there are other alternatives. You don't just have to prescribe an opioid-based medication.

As a result, opioid prescriptions out of the emergency room have decreased by 36 percent over the 6-month course of this pilot program in Colorado. Those are remarkable results. We introduced legislation to mimic the same thing and to learn best practices at the Federal level so that hospitals around the country can work together, share those best practices, identify what works, and use them.

We have to reform the Medicaid Program so there is no incentive for doctors to overprescribe addictive medication. In Alamosa, physicians we talked to are entering into contracts with their patients. At San Luis Valley Health Regional Medical Center, they are entering into contracts with patients about the responsibility that goes with taking these powerful, powerful drugs.

We found new ways to make sure that the pill mills are being discovered and abandoned. We try to make sure that people can communicate with each other on how these treatments work.

While I was in Colorado, we talked about the devastation that drugs are having on their small communities. We learned about a group of high schoolers who are talking to other high schools about the dangers of addiction and prescription and drug overdose. They are trying to work with each other to stop the cycle and to make sure that people who need help find help and hopefully will avoid it in the first place.

Perhaps, one of the most frightening things that I heard during this roundtable—being a parent with three children of my own, I often worry about what happens to them when they go to school and what pressures they face. Two of them are young now. Our daughter is 14, and she will be entering high school. I worry about the pressures they will face from their peers. I worry about them, and I worry about what happens to our community and to their friends with what is around them. But I never thought that I would hear what I heard in the San Luis Valley.

We were talking about prescriptions and reimbursement from Medicaid. One of the providers brought up a challenge

that they had with getting reimbursement. I later learned from a pharmacist that it may simply be a coding problem, and if it were coded correctly, the reimbursement would occur.

This is what this provider said. They were trying to make sure Medicaid could reimburse for the nasal spray of Narcan so that children could administer it to their parents when they overdosed, because it is easier for a young child or a little child to administer a nasal spray than to give an injection.

Kids are given nasal spray so they can revive their parents. If that parent goes to the emergency room at Swedish hospital in Denver, CO, revived by that child, 1 in 10 of those parents revived will not come back again because they will be dead.

We have done a lot of work in this country, and we have a lot more work to do when it comes to opiate addiction and crisis. We have a lot of work to do in this Congress to come together and find ways to stop this—to break the cycle, to make sure it is easier to prescribe the drugs that will help instead of create addictions.

We have talked to people who said they have to have 8 hours of training and certification, which makes it impossible for certain drugs to be administered by a physician in the emergency room because they don't have time to comply with the paperwork. They actually would rather prescribe this drug than the opiate-based drug because the opiate-based drug, they know, would create the possibility of addiction. Yet this other drug wouldn't. There are more barriers to prescribe the drug that wouldn't cause the harm than the drug that would cause the harm. So we have a lot of work to do. These aren't Republican issues or Democratic issues. They are our families' issues. They are our friends' issues. They are our communities' issues.

I will end it with this story. One of the healthcare professionals we talked to told a story of their son who was a golfer—an athlete, loved to golf. He was injured golfing, so they wanted to make sure their son was cared for so he could recover and go on to a golf career or whatever career he had in front of him. They took their son to the doctor. Their son was given Vicodin to address the pain from the injury. At this point in the story, the mother started to cry because she feels guilty and responsible for the very first treatment that led down a path of addiction and the eventual death of their son. All this mom wanted to do was help, and she now feels the blame of the powerful drug that led to the addiction and death of their son. It is not a unique story. That story has been shared far too many times around the country, and yet here we are once again talking about it.

So I encourage my colleagues, let's continue the great work we have already done. Let's do more. Let's work together, and let's make sure we can find solutions this country will be proud of. We will know this when our

communities recover and people stop dying.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, all postclosure time on the Pizzella nomination expire at 9:30 a.m. tomorrow and the Senate vote on confirmation of the Pizzella nomination; further, that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; finally, that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to each vote.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

FISCAL YEAR 2018 INTELLIGENCE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I am putting a hold on the Fiscal Year 2018 Intelligence Authorization Act, as currently drafted, for two reasons.

The bill marked up by the Senate Intelligence Committee included three amendments I offered, one of which required that the Director of National Intelligence, working with the Department of the Treasury, produce a report on the threat to the United States from Russian money laundering. My first objection to the current version of the bill is based on a change to that provision which downgrades responsibility for the report and removes the Department of the Treasury. The critical importance of this issue to our national security requires the highest level responsibility within the intelligence community. It also requires the direct involvement of the Department of the Treasury to ensure that all the Department's financial intelligence resources, including those that fall outside the intelligence community, are brought to bear.

My second objection, as I explained in my minority views to the bill in committee, is that it includes a provision stating that it is the sense of Congress "that WikiLeaks and the senior

leadership of WikiLeaks resemble a non-state hostile intelligence service often abetted by state actors and should be treated as such a service by the United States.” My concern with this language does not relate to the actions of WikiLeaks, which, as I have stressed in the past, was part of a direct attack on our democracy.

My concern is that the use of the novel phrase “non-state hostile intelligence service” may have legal, constitutional, and policy implications, particularly should it be applied to journalists inquiring about secrets. The language in the bill suggesting that the U.S. Government has some unstated course of action against “non-state hostile intelligence services” is equally troubling.

The damage done by WikiLeaks to the United States is clear, but with any new challenge to our country, Congress ought not react in a manner that could have negative consequences, unforeseen or not, for our constitutional principles. The introduction of vague, undefined new categories of enemies constitutes such an ill-considered reaction.

50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FAIR HOUSING ACT

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act. On this day in 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law groundbreaking legislation to protect Americans from housing discrimination and uphold the values of fairness and equality under the law.

Prior to the passage of the law and its subsequent amendments, it was legal for Americans to be denied access to housing based on their race, color, national origin, religion, gender, disability, or familial status. African-American soldiers returning from fighting for their country on foreign shores would come home to find that they couldn't purchase a house in certain neighborhoods because of the color of their skin. The Fair Housing Act was a bold commitment to eradicating this kind of discrimination, which still continues to this day.

When my own parents moved to New Jersey, illegal racial real estate steering efforts nearly kept them from buying a house in an all-White neighborhood. It took a sting operation coordinated by the local Fair Housing Council with a White couple posing as my parents to break the cycle of segregation in the town in which I would eventually grow up. The Fair Housing Act empowered my parents and their advocates and lawyers to press for their right to fair and quality housing, and it stands today as one of the seminal pieces of legislation passed in our country's history.

Today, as we recognize the 50th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act, we remember that this landmark civil rights law was not meant to be the end of our

efforts to make housing in this country more fair and more just, but just the beginning.

We know we have so much work left to do when it comes to expanding access to affordable, safe, and fair housing in America, and we must remain committed to protecting and expanding on the progress made 50 years ago today by the Fair Housing Act.

Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO RENEE SPROW

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate the contributions of Renee Sprow, who dedicated over 30 years of service to the Small Business Development Center, SBDC, network. Ms. Sprow spent her career promoting economic development and the growth of small businesses, which means that she spent her career helping countless people and their families achieve the American dream.

One of many highlights of Ms. Sprow's service to the Federal Government and private industry was her critical role in helping to establish the National Minority Purchasing Council, now known as the National Minority Supplier Development Council, which reports private contracts exceeding \$1 billion to minority suppliers. She designed and directed small, minority and women-owned subcontracting programs for major Federal and private-sector construction and revitalization projects, resulting in the award of multimillion dollar subcontracts.

Under Ms. Sprow's leadership as director of the Maryland SBDC, the value of contracts awarded to minority firms who met the U.S. Department of Defense's Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Business Utilization qualifications increased by more than 200 percent.

Ms. Sprow also participated in the drafting of Public Law 95-507, which established the legal authority to reshape Federal procurement policy for contracting with minority and women-owned firms. As an entrepreneur herself, Mr. Sprow owned and operated two businesses that generated annual revenues exceeding \$1 million.

Ms. Sprow's objective while serving as director of the Maryland SBDC was to contribute to economic development within the State by making the network responsive to the needs of Maryland's small business community. She deftly managed a \$4.3 million annual budget and 50 staff members in 22 offices located throughout Maryland. During her tenure, she realigned the SBDC network to target assistance to businesses more effectively and efficiently. In 2009, one of her regions ranked first in region III and second nationwide for the annual SBDC of the Year award presented by the Small Business Administration, SBA. In addition, the Washington, DC, and Baltimore district SBA offices each selected a Maryland SBDC region as the winner of the 2009 SBDC Excellence and Innovation Center Award.

Ms. Sprow transformed the SBDC network's operational methods to favor economic outcomes over mere output. To do so, she instituted a management performance system to ensure accountability for network performance. This management tool for evaluating, measuring, analyzing, and improving SBDC operations also helped objectively determine economic impact and customer satisfaction.

Ms. Sprow established a subsidiary program to assist firms in obtaining government contracts. In 2008, the program's clients obtained more than \$37 million in government contracts. In conjunction, she developed industry assistance programs for high technology, retail, construction, and green business opportunities in response to client needs. Under Ms. Sprow's leadership, the Maryland SBDC attained national accreditation in 2000, 2005, and 2009. It is no surprise that, thanks in part to Ms. Sprow's significant contributions, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has named Maryland the No. 1 State in the Nation for entrepreneurship and innovation.

Ms. Sprow received a B.A. in business administration from Howard University and a master's degree in business administration, specializing in marketing, from The George Washington University. She was the guest of honor at a luncheon last week, while the Senate was in recess, to celebrate her career and her retirement, so I wanted to take this opportunity to urge my colleagues to join me in thanking Ms. Sprow for her exemplary service to her community, to Maryland, and the Nation and to send our best wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement.

TRIBUTE TO DR. KENNETH A. BERTRAM

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the service and achievements of an esteemed and valued member of the U.S. Senior Executive Service, Dr. Kenneth A. Bertram, who completes a 32-year career of distinguished service to our Nation on June 30, 2018.

Dr. Bertram has worked tirelessly to improve the medical readiness of U.S. military personnel, and challenged the constraints of a burdensome acquisition system that discouraged meaningful partnerships between military medicine and the commercial sector. His work culminated in the creation of the Medical Technology Enterprise Consortium, a South Carolina-based nonprofit corporation that connects more than 170 private-sector companies, academic research institutions, and nonprofit organizations to the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command, fostering research collaborations to prevent injuries and disease impacting our Nation's soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, treating those who are wounded in conflict and restoring the injured to the maximum achievable quality of life.

Dr. Bertram's personal awards include the Meritorious Civilian Service Medal, the Superior Civilian Service Medal, two awards of the Legion of Merit, "A" Proficiency Designator in Hematology/Oncology from the Surgeon General of the U.S. Army, Order of Military Medical Merit, two awards of the U.S. Army Meritorious Service Medal, and two awards of the U.S. Army Commendation Medal. Dr. Bertram's professionalism, patriotism, and sustained selfless commitment to service reflect the very best values of our Nation's Senior Executive Service. I join his family and friends in wishing him the best in the years ahead.

REMEMBERING BRONSON C. LA FOLLETTE

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Bronson C. La Follette, who was born in 1936 in Washington, DC, and passed away March 15, 2018, in Madison, WI. Bronson dedicated his life to the pursuit of justice and was known as the People's Lawyer. He was a progressive in the tradition of his father, Senator Robert M. La Follette, Jr., and his grandparents Senator Robert M. "Fighting Bob" La Follette, Sr., and Belle Case La Follette.

A true Badger at heart, Bronson earned his bachelor's and law degrees from the University of Wisconsin—Madison. Following his graduation in 1960, he worked in private practice before being appointed Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin by U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy. In 1964, at the age of 28, he was elected as Wisconsin's attorney general and served two terms. He was the youngest state attorney general in American history ever elected to the office. As attorney general, he was a champion for consumer protection and served as chair of President Lyndon Johnson's Consumer Advisory Council.

In 1968, Bronson became the Democratic Party's nominee for Governor of Wisconsin, an election he lost to incumbent Governor Warren Knowles. In 1974, Bronson was again elected as attorney general of Wisconsin, vowing to make the department of justice live up to its name. To Bronson, that meant taking on an activist role, hiring a bright young progressive team, and not being afraid to tackle new ideas and sensitive subjects head on. Wisconsinites will recognize some of the attorneys who made up that bright, young team because two of them have become iconic progressives in their own right. Ed Garvey and Kathleen Falk spent a portion of their early careers in Bronson La Follette's department of justice.

In 1978, Bronson married the love of his life, Barbara. He was also blessed with a son, a daughter, two grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

In 1987, Bronson retired from public service and joined a prominent law firm where he continued to advocate for criminal justice reform and government transparency.

Bronson was also a passionate advocate for children. He founded the Dane County Project for the Prevention of Child Abuse and became the chairman of the National Campaign for Missing and Exploited Children.

No tribute to Bronson La Follette would be complete without a nod to his wonderful sense of humor. Together with his friend, State treasurer Charles Smith, he campaigned in a camper, bringing their unique blend of politics and fun to communities throughout the State. He cherished his reputation as a talented washboard player and percussionist. His most remembered antics involved his Irish Setter "Cutter." When Bronson was cited with allowing Cutter to run at large in Maple Bluff, he hired Madison attorney and prankster Edward Ben Elson to defend the dog. Elson demanded that the dog be tried by a jury of his peers: 12 Irish Setters. In his next campaign, Bronson had buttons featuring Cutter with the slogan "Bronson dog gone it."

A colorful spectrum of words is necessary to capture the essence of Bronson La Follette, some of which may seem contradictory. Those words include progressive, irreverent, bipartisan, entertaining, passionate, fair, outspoken, just, funny, service-minded, champion, fun-loving, defender, activist, committed, blunt, values-driven, but what I will remember most about Bronson is how vigorously he embraced his personality, how sweetly he loved his family, and how passionately he fought for justice. Wisconsin owes a debt of gratitude to this extraordinary man who brought equality and justice to so many.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE SIKH COMMUNITY IN NEW JERSEY

• Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the important contributions of the Sikh community in New Jersey and across the country. New Jersey is enriched by the diversity of its residents who have promoted a climate of social tolerance and intellectual pluralism that has sustained our State throughout its history. Since first immigrating to the United States from Punjab, India, over 100 years ago, the Sikh community has played a critical role in enhancing and contributing to New Jersey and our Nation.

This month, Sikhs in New Jersey and across the country will celebrate their most significant annual event, Vaisakhi, the Sikh New Year; providing the Sikh community the time to remember history, celebrate collectively, and recommit to their religious traditions.

The New Jersey Sikh community has demonstrated a strong commitment to public service. Every Gurdwara, the Sikh place of worship, has a Langar, a free community kitchen that serves all visitors regardless of religion, caste,

gender, economic status, or ethnicity. The Langar instills the notion of equality and the brotherhood for all. Every November, the New Jersey Sikh community expands on this tradition and organizes the "Let's Share a Meal" event that distributes meals to homeless shelters in the area. In 2017, 275 Sikh community members prepared, packed, and delivered meals to 84 shelters over 2 days. This served more than 15,000 New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania residents.

New Jersey also recently welcomed three Sikh Americans as new public officials. On January 1, 2018, Ravi Bhalla became Hoboken's 30th mayor and the State's first Sikh mayor. Bhalla had previously served two terms on Hoboken's city council. Although Bhalla experienced periodic hateful attacks during his mayoral campaign, voters resoundingly rejected such divisive rhetoric when they elected him mayor.

In addition to electing its first Sikh mayor, New Jersey also elected Balvir Singh as a member of the Burlington County Board of Chosen Freeholders, making him the first Sikh American to win a countywide election in New Jersey. Singh, who served for nearly 2 years as a member of the Burlington Township Board of Education, was sworn into office on January 3, 2018.

New Jersey is also home to the Nation's first Sikh State attorney general, Gurbir Grewal. Grewal had previously served as the Bergen County prosecutor. The State Senate unanimously approved his appointment by a 29-0 vote on January 16. Grewal will enforce the law in a manner that protects all New Jersey residents.

The broad support that these three individuals garnered is a testament to New Jersey's culture of inclusion of individuals of all ethnicities and religious backgrounds.

However, we know that Sikh Americans across the country continue to endure discrimination and hateful attacks, from school bullying to verbal assaults to violence.

I invite my colleagues to join me in recognizing the important contributions of the Sikh community across the country as it celebrates its New Year festival. May we join with Sikh Americans in rejecting discrimination of any kind and embracing the rich diversity that makes each of our States strong and whole.●

REMEMBERING HARRY SHIPLEY, JR.

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to the life of Harry Shipley, Jr., from my hometown of Fort Smith, AR. Mr. Shipley was a husband, father, veteran, businessman, and community leader. He passed away on March 24, 2018, at the age of 96.

Born in 1922 during the Great Depression, Shipley graduated from Fort

Smith High School, where he was student body president. He attended the University of Arkansas and served as student commander of the Army ROTC while earning a degree in business.

A member of the Greatest Generation, he was a second lieutenant in reconnaissance and intelligence in the U.S. Army during World War II. He served in the European Theater and was injured in the Battle of Siegfried Line. Shipley received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart for his service to his country.

After the war, he graduated from the American Institute of Baking in Chicago, IL, and joined his father at the Shipley Baking Company. He worked there for 54 years, from 1945 to 1996, along with his brother and sons. He retired in 1996 as chairman of the board after the company was sold to Flower Foods.

Mr. Shipley was also a man of faith and someone who was involved in his community in a variety of ways. He was a lifetime member of First United Methodist Church and served as an usher and on several committees within the congregation.

I join with many in the Fort Smith community to honor Harry Shipley, Jr., and the wonderful legacy he leaves behind. My thoughts and prayers are with his loved ones as they mourn his passing and celebrate his life.●

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF COASTAL ENTERPRISES, INC.

● Mr. KING. Mr. President, today, I wish to recognize the 40th anniversary of Coastal Enterprises, Inc., CEI. Headquartered in Brunswick, ME, CEI is a national leader in rural economic development, helping to grow businesses and support communities through providing financing assistance and support for environmentally sustainable practices to increase prosperity in Maine and across the country. CEI provides loans and technical assistance to small businesses and community development stakeholders while simultaneously advancing changes in public policy to promote an environment ripe for economic growth.

Since its founding, CEI has been a mission-driven organization, striving to enable all people, especially those from low-income backgrounds, to reach their full potential. With a joint focus on economic growth and environmental health, CEI has tirelessly worked for 40 years to create a Maine economy that is sustainable both for our citizens and our land.

CEI's immense impact is undisputed; since inception, they have financed \$1.32 billion dollars' worth of loans, helping over 2,700 businesses. These companies often provide the backbone of their communities, in total employing over 37,000 people. Furthermore, CEI has been instrumental in the areas of affordable housing and childcare. Through their investments, they have created or preserved 2,075 affordable

housing units and 5,818 childcare slots, providing much-needed relief for families.

The success of the last 40 years speaks to the vision of the founders and the dedication of CEI's employees. We are lucky to have Coastal Enterprises, Inc., in our State, and I wish to congratulate them on their 40th anniversary. I am looking forward to watching the positive impacts of CEI's work for years to come.●

REMEMBERING WILLIAM "BILL" VARN

● Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, today I would like to take a moment to recognize and honor the life of William "Bill" Varn, a great South Carolinian, who departed this life on November 18, 2017. Bill was a veteran of the U.S. Navy and served in World War II. After the war, Bill joined and eventually took over Enterprise Bank, originally located in Smoaks, SC. Mr. Varn served as CEO from 1951 to 2013, when he was named director emeritus last spring. It is believed that he is South Carolina's longest serving banker ever, and dedicated more than 70 years of his life to the industry. Today Emeritus Bank is a \$333 million institution spread across six SC counties.

Mr. Varn will be remembered not only for the great contributions he made in the financial services industry, but also for his love of his country, State, and family.●

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF FAIRVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH

● Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate and honor Fairview Baptist Church in Spartanburg, SC for their 100th anniversary, which will be celebrated on June 24, 2018. Fairview Baptist Church was established in 1918 by a group of residents of the Fairview community, known also as the Flatwoods, under direction of Rev. C.M. Ellis and nine charter members. Starting with only 40 members 100 years ago, Fairview Baptist has since grown to include hundreds from the Spartanburg area, while still remaining a welcoming and devoted place of worship in the community.

I acknowledge and celebrate the church's 100 years as a congregation faithfully serving the people of Spartanburg.●

200TH ANNIVERSARY OF STANDING SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH

● Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate and honor Standing Springs Baptist Church in Simpsonville, SC, for their 200th anniversary, which will be celebrated on October 18, 2018. As Standing Springs celebrates their bicentennial throughout the week and weekend, I thank them for their ongoing mission of service and fellowship that I hope will con-

tinue for 200 more years to come. I acknowledge and celebrate the church's 200 years as a congregation faithfully serving the people of Simpsonville and Greenville County.●

UNVEILING OF THE BISHOPVILLE JAMES DAVISON HERIOT STATUE ON THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARMISTICE DAY

● Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I would like to recognize the American Legion Post 29 in Bishopville, SC as they celebrate the unveiling of the James Davison Heriot statue in downtown Bishopville on Sunday, November 11, 2018. James Davison Heriot was a South Carolina National Guard soldier who received the Medal of Honor for his actions during World War I.

Post 29 is honoring the Americans who fought in World War I by unveiling this statue on the 100th anniversary of the end of the American involvement in the conflict, previously known as Armistice Day. I look forward to the unveiling of the Bishopville Heriot statue, as well as all other commemorations that will take place on this special 100th anniversary.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:32 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2219. An act to increase the role of the financial industry in combating human trafficking.

H.R. 4203. An act to amend title 18, United States Code, with regard to stalking.

H.R. 4921. An act to require the Surface Transportation Board to implement certain recommendations of the Inspector General of the Department of Transportation.

H.R. 4925. An act to require the Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration to implement certain recommendations for management and collection of railroad safety data.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 431(a)(3) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-31), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following individuals on the part of the House to the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission: Ms. Rebecca Kleefisch of Oconomowoc, Wisconsin and Ms. Heather Higgins of New York, New York.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 12:19 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

H.R. 3445. An act to enhance the transparency and accelerate the impact of programs under the African Growth and Opportunity Act and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3979. An act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 to reauthorize the volunteer services, community partnership, and

refuge education programs of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and for other purposes.

The enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 2219. An act to increase the role of the financial industry in combating human trafficking; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 4203. An act to amend title 18, United States Code, with regard to stalking; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

H.R. 4921. An act to require the Surface Transportation Board to implement certain recommendations of the Inspector General of the Department of Transportation; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 4925. An act to require the Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration to implement certain recommendations for management and collection of railroad safety data; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

EC-4774. A communication from the Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "OMB Final Sequestration Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2018"; to the Special Committee on Aging; Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; Appropriations; Armed Services; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; the Budget; Commerce, Science, and Transportation; Energy and Natural Resources; Environment and Public Works; Select Committee on Ethics; Finance; Foreign Relations; Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; Indian Affairs; Select Committee on Intelligence; the Judiciary; Rules and Administration; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and Veterans' Affairs.

EC-4775. A communication from the Acting Administrator, Rural Housing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Truth in Lending—Real Estate Settlement Procedures" ((7 CFR Part 1940) (RIN0575-AD11)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 5, 2018; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4776. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, Office of the General Counsel, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Civil Monetary Penalty Inflation Adjustment for 2018" (RIN0510-AA04) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 5, 2018; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4777. A communication from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Importation of Lemons From Chile Into the Conti-

ental United States" (RIN0579-AE20) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4778. A communication from the Alternate Federal Register Liaison Officer, Office of the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Defense Support of Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies" (RIN0790-AK04) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 10, 2018; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4779. A communication from the Alternate Federal Register Liaison Officer, Office of the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Defense Support of Civil Authorities" (RIN0790-AK06) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 10, 2018; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4780. A communication from the Senior Official performing the duties of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on the mobilizations of selected reserve units, received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 5, 2018; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4781. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting a report on the approved retirement of Lieutenant General Herbert R. McMaster, Jr., United States Army, and his advancement to the grade of lieutenant general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4782. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting a report on the approved retirement of Vice Admiral Terry J. Benedict, United States Navy, and his advancement to the grade of vice admiral on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4783. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), transmitting the report of fifteen (15) officers authorized to wear the insignia of the grade of major general or brigadier general in accordance with title 10, United States Code, section 777; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4784. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Legislative Affairs), transmitting proposed legislation relative to the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019"; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4785. A communication from the Secretary of the Navy, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the review of the post courts-martial actions in the case of the 1944 Port Chicago Explosion; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4786. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to United States Citizens Detained by Iran; to the Committees on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Finance; and Foreign Relations.

EC-4787. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a notice of the continuation of the national emergency with respect to Somalia that was declared in Executive Order 13536 of April 12, 2010; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4788. A communication from the General Counsel, Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Collection and Transmission of Annual AMC Registry Fees" ((12 CFR Part 1102) (Docket No. AS17-07)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 5, 2018; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4789. A communication from the Acting Director, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Consumer Response Annual Report"; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4790. A communication from the Acting Director, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Office of Minority and Women Inclusion Annual Report to Congress"; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4791. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Implementation of the February 2017 Australia Group (AG) Intersessional Decisions and the June 2017 AG Plenary Understandings; Addition of India to the AG" (RIN0694-AH37) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 5, 2018; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4792. A communication from the Director of Legislative Affairs, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Assessment Regulations" ((12 CFR Part 327) (RIN3064-AE40)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4793. A communication from the Director of Legislative Affairs, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Removal of Transferred OTS Regulations Regarding Minimum Security Procedures Amendments to FDIC Regulations" (RIN3064-AE47) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4794. A communication from the Director of Legislative Affairs, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Removal of Transferred OTS Regulations Regarding Consumer Protection in Sales of Insurance" (RIN3064-AE49) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4795. A communication from the Assistant to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Real Estate Appraisals" (RIN1700-AE81) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2019; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4796. A communication from the Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to discretionary appropriations legislation; to the Committee on the Budget.

EC-4797. A communication from the Federal Register Liaison, Office of Natural Resources Revenue, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Inflation Adjustments to Civil Monetary Penalty Rates for Calendar Year 2018" (RIN1012-AA23) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-4798. A communication from the Federal Register Liaison, Office of Natural Resources Revenue, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of

a rule entitled “Repeal of Regulatory Amendment and Restoration of Former Regulatory Language Governing Service of Official Correspondence” (RIN1012-AA22) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-4799. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “New Source Performance Standards and National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants; Delegation of Authority to New Mexico” (FRL No. 9975-94-Region 6) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4800. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of State Implementation Plans; Alaska: Regional Haze Progress Report” (FRL No. 9976-71-Region 10) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4801. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Missouri; Update to Materials Incorporated by Reference” (FRL No. 9976-48-Region 7) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4802. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Findings of Failure to Submit State Implementation Plan Submissions for the 2012 Fine Particulate Matter National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)” (FRL No. 9976-35-OAR) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4803. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval of Nebraska Air Quality Implementation Plans, Operating Permits Program, and 112(l) Program; Revision to Nebraska Administrative Code” (FRL No. 9976-52-Region 7) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4804. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval of California Air Plan Revisions, Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District” (FRL No. 9976-06-Region 9) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4805. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; State of Wyoming; Sheridan PM10 Nonattainment Area Limited Maintenance Plan and Redesignation Request” (FRL No. 9975-84-Region 8) received during adjournment of the Senate in

the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4806. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; State of Colorado; Revisions to the Transportation Conformity Consultation Process” (FRL No. 9976-02-Region 8) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4807. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Quality Designations for the 2010 Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standard—Round 3—Supplemental Amendment” (FRL No. 9976-40-OAR) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4808. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; South Carolina; Update to Materials Incorporated by Reference” (FRL No. 9974-17-Region 4) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4809. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to tariffs on aluminum and steel imports; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4810. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel, General Law, Ethics, and Regulation, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 5, 2018; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4811. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Initial Guidance Under Section 163(j) as Applicable to Taxable Years Beginning After December 31, 2017” (Notice 2018-28) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4812. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Announcement and Report Concerning Advance Pricing Agreements” (Notice 2018-08) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 3, 2018; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4813. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Additional Guidance Under Section 965; Guidance Under Sections 62, 962, and 6081 in Connection With Section 965; and Penalty Relief Under Sections 6654 and 6655 in Connection with Section 965 and Repeal of Section 958(b) (4)” (Notice 2018-26) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of

the Senate on April 3, 2018; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4814. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “National Security Considerations with Respect to Country-by-Country Reporting” (Notice 2018-31) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 3, 2018; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4815. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Guidance Regarding the Implementation of New Section 1446(f) for Partnership Interests That Are Not Publicly Traded” (Notice 2018-29) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 3, 2018; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4816. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Guidance Under Section 1061, Partnership Interests Held in Connection with Performance of Services” (Notice 2018-18) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 3, 2018; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4817. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Age 100 Guidance for 2017 CSO Tables” (Rev. Proc. 2018-20) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 3, 2018; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4818. A communication from the Chief of the Border Security Regulations Branch, Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Definition of Importer Security Filing Importer” (RIN1651-AA98) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 10, 2018; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4819. A communication from the Chief of the Trade and Commercial Regulations Branch, Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Extension of Port Limits of Savannah, GA” (CBP Dec. 18-03) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4820. A joint communication from the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Attorney General, transmitting, pursuant to law, an annual report relative to the Health Care Fraud and Abuse Control Program for fiscal year 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4821. A communication from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of the texts and background statements of international agreements, other than treaties (List 2018-0030 - 2018-0035); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4822. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of defense articles, including technical data and defense services for the operation, training, and maintenance of ScanEagle and Integrator Unmanned Aerial System for end use by the Royal Saudi Land Forces in the amount of \$50,000,000 or more

(Transmittal No. DDTC 17-134); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4823. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of fully automatic machine guns, gun barrels, spare parts, and accessories to Bahrain in the amount of \$1,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 16-097); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4824. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of machine guns, spare parts, and accessories to Saudi Arabia in the amount of \$1,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 16-118); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4825. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of defense articles, including technical data and defense services to Norway to support the integration, installation, operation, training, testing, O-Level maintenance, and repair of F-135 propulsion systems in the amount of \$100,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 17-068); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4826. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of defense articles, including technical data and defense services to Germany and Israel to support the design, development, and manufacture of magazines, grips, new variations of pistols, and other firearm components by Israel (Transmittal No. DDTC 17-102); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4827. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of defense articles, including technical data and defense services to Israel to support the Missile Firing Unit and Stunner Interceptor Subsystems of the David's Sling Weapon System in the amount of \$100,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 17-107); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4828. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of defense articles, including technical data and defense services to support qualification, modification, test, repair, and integration of components for Tamir Interceptor missiles for end-use by the Ministry of Defense for Israel in the amount of \$100,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 17-120); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4829. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) and (d) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of defense articles, including technical data and defense services to Canada and the United Kingdom for the production of Tomahawk Missile Electronic Assemblies in the amount of \$100,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 17-121); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4830. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to

section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of semi-automatic pistols of various calibers to Canada for commercial resale in the amount of \$1,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 17-145); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4831. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, the certification of a proposed license for the export of bolt action rifles and semi-automatic rifles of various calibers to Canada for commercial resale in the amount of \$1,000,000 or more (Transmittal No. DDTC 17-131); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-4832. A communication from the Regulations Coordinator, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Privacy Act; Implementation" (RIN0925-AA63) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 3, 2018; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4833. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Applications for Regenerative Medicine Advanced Therapies"; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4834. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a performance report relative to the Animal Drug User Fee Act for fiscal year 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4835. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a performance report relative to the Animal Drug User Fee Act for fiscal year 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4836. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a financial report relative to the Animal Drug User Fee Act for fiscal year 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4837. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a financial report relative to the Animal Generic Drug User Fee Act for fiscal year 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4838. A communication from the Director of Regulations and Policy Management Staff, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Cigarettes, Smokeless Tobacco, and Covered Tobacco Products; Change of Office Name and Address; Technical Amendment" ((21 CFR Part 1140) (Docket No. FDA-2018-N-0011)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4839. A communication from the Director of Regulations and Policy Management Staff, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Medical Devices; Technical Amendment" ((21 CFR Parts 890, 800, 1020, and 1040) (Docket No. FDA-2018-N-0011)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4840. A communication from the Director of Regulations and Policy Management Staff, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Good Guidance Practices; Technical Amendment" ((21 CFR Part 10) (Docket No. FDA-2018-N-1097)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4841. A communication from the Director of Regulations and Policy Management Staff, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Revision of Organization; Technical Amendment" ((21 CFR Part 5) (Docket No. FDA-2018-N-0011)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4842. A communication from the Chairman, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2017 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4843. A communication from the Chairman, Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2017 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4844. A communication from the Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Administration's fiscal year 2017 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4845. A communication from the Director, Office of the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department's fiscal year 2017 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4846. A communication from the Special Counsel, Office of Special Counsel, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Office's fiscal year 2017 report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4847. A communication from the Director of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Corporation's fiscal year 2017 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4848. A communication from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2017 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4849. A communication from the Chief Judge, Superior Court of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the District of Columbia

Family Court Act; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4850. A communication from the General Counsel, Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Board's fiscal year 2017 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4851. A communication from the Director, Congressional Affairs and Public Relations, U.S. Trade and Development Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Agency's fiscal year 2017 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4852. A communication from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2017 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4853. A communication from the District of Columbia Auditor, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled, "Stronger Management of the Housing Production Trust Fund Could Build More Affordable Housing"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4854. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Office of Diversion Control, Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Schedules of Controlled Substances: Temporary Placement of Seven Fentanyl-Related Substances In Schedule I" (Docket No. DEA-475) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-4855. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Office of Diversion Control, Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Schedules of Controlled Substances: Temporary Placement of MAB-CHMINACA In Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act" (Docket No. DEA-421) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-4856. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Office of Diversion Control, Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Schedules of Controlled Substances: Temporary Placement of Fentanyl-Related Substances In Schedule I" (Docket No. DEA-476) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-4857. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Office of Diversion Control, Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Schedules of Controlled Substances: Temporary Placement of Cyclopropyl Fentanyl In Schedule I" (Docket No. DEA-474) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 6, 2018; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-4858. A communication from the Attorney, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to

law, the report of a rule entitled "Drawbridge Operation Regulation Atlantic Intra-coastal Waterway, Wappoo Creek, Charleston, SC" ((RIN1625-AA09) (Docket No. USCG-2017-0713)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4859. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zones Delaware River, Philadelphia, PA" ((RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2018-0090)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4860. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zones Delaware River, Philadelphia, PA" ((RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2018-0246)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4861. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zone; Lower Mississippi River, Port Gibson, MS" ((RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2018-0229)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4862. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zone: Pier 39 Fireworks Display, San Francisco, CA" ((RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2018-0125)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4863. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zone; Cape Fear River, NC" ((RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2017-0965)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4864. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zone: Juan Benitez Fireworks Display, San Francisco, CA" ((RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2018-0063)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4865. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zone: Vigor Industrial Drydock Movement, West Duwamish Waterway; Seattle, WA" ((RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2015-1061)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4866. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Zone: Recurring Fireworks Display Within the Fifth Coast Guard District" ((RIN1625-AA00) (Docket No. USCG-2018-0182)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Com-

mittee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4867. A communication from the Associate Bureau Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Connect America Fund; ETC Annual Reports and Certifications; Establishing Just and Reasonable Rates for Local Exchange Carriers; Developing a Unified Inter-carrier Compensation Regime" ((RIN3060-AK57) (FCC 18-29)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 5, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4868. A communication from the Deputy Chief, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Procedures for the Mobility Fund Phase II Challenge Process" (WC Docket No. 10-90 and WT Docket No. 10-208) (DA 18-186) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4869. A communication from the Deputy Chief, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Parts 1, 2, 22, 24, 27, 90, and 95 of the Commission's Rules to Improve Wireless Coverage Through the Use of Signal Boosters" ((WT Docket No. 10-4) (FCC 18-35)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4870. A communication from the Associate Chief, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Accelerating Wireless Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment" ((WT Docket No. 17-79) (FCC 18-30)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 9, 2018; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4871. A communication from the Chairman, Federal Maritime Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the 56th Annual Report of the activities of the Federal Maritime Commission for fiscal year 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Ms. MURKOWSKI, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, without amendment:

S. 1160. A bill to include Livingston County, the city of Jonesboro in Union County, and the city of Freeport in Stephenson County, Illinois, to the Lincoln National Heritage Area, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115-224).

By Ms. MURKOWSKI, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 1181. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Agriculture to expedite access to certain Federal land under the administrative jurisdiction of each Secretary for good Samaritan search-and-recovery missions, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115-225).

By Ms. MURKOWSKI, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, without amendment:

S. 1260. A bill to authorize the exchange of certain Federal land located in Gulf Islands National Seashore for certain non-Federal

land in Jackson County, Mississippi, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115-226).

S. 1602. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land as the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115-227).

By Ms. MURKOWSKI, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

H.R. 2615. A bill to authorize the exchange of certain land located in Gulf Islands National Seashore, Jackson County, Mississippi, between the National Park Service and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115-228).

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. GRAHAM (for himself, Mr. COONS, Mr. TILLIS, and Mr. BOOKER):

S. 2644. A bill to ensure independent investigations and judicial review of the removal of a special counsel, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. ERNST (for herself, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 2645. A bill to establish a demonstration program under which the Drug Enforcement Administration provides grants to certain States to enable those States to increase participation in drug take-back programs; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BROWN (for himself and Mrs. CAPITO):

S. 2646. A bill to establish a pilot program administered by the Secretary of Labor, in collaboration with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, to award competitive grants to counties (or other equivalent entities) and Tribal entities to administer combined workforce training and drug addiction treatment and recovery programs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 2647. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to strengthen requirements related to nutrient information on food labels, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. NELSON:

S. 2648. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to encourage employers to hire individuals working in dying industries or occupations made obsolete by technology, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. WHITEHOUSE:

S. 2649. A bill to require the Secretary of Energy to establish a natural gas demand response pilot program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. LEE:

S. 2650. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to add definitions for the terms "common carrier" and "personal operator", and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. LEE):

S. 2651. A bill to promote competition and help consumers save money by giving them the freedom to choose where they buy prescription pet medications, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. 2652. A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Stephen Michael Gleason; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. YOUNG (for himself, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. COONS):

S.J. Res. 58. A joint resolution to require certifications regarding actions by Saudi Arabia in Yemen, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. MCCONNELL (for himself and Mr. SCHUMER):

S. Res. 457. A resolution to authorize testimony and representation in Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport Co., et al. v. John Doe, et al. (Ct. of Common Pleas, Cumberland County, Pa.); considered and agreed to.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. MURPHY):

S. Res. 458. A resolution designating April 11, 2018, as the "Sesquicentennial of Connecticut's Navy Installation"; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. HARRIS (for herself, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. WARREN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. Res. 459. A resolution recognizing "Black Maternal Health Week" to bring national attention to the maternal health care crisis in the Black community and the importance of reducing the rate of maternal mortality and morbidity among Black women; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 379

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 379, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to eliminate the five month waiting period for disability insurance benefits under such title for individuals with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

S. 533

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 533, a bill to modernize the Undetectable Firearms Act of 1988.

S. 1086

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1086, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to remove the prohibition on eligibility for TRICARE Reserve Select of members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces who are eligible to enroll in a health benefits plan under chapter 89 of title 5, United States Code.

S. 1533

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a co-

sponsor of S. 1533, a bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to cover physician services delivered by podiatric physicians to ensure access by Medicaid beneficiaries to appropriate quality foot and ankle care, to amend title XVIII of such Act to modify the requirements for diabetic shoes to be included under Medicare, and for other purposes.

S. 1890

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1890, a bill to improve the understanding of, and promote access to treatment for, chronic kidney disease, and for other purposes.

S. 1990

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1990, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the amounts payable by the Department of Veterans Affairs for dependency and indemnity compensation, to modify the requirements for dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain veterans rated totally disabled at the time of death, and for other purposes.

S. 2060

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2060, a bill to promote democracy and human rights in Burma, and for other purposes.

S. 2177

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2177, a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to establish a minimum salary threshold for bona fide executive, administrative, and professional employees exempt from Federal overtime compensation requirements, and automatically update such threshold every 3 years.

S. 2230

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT) and the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2230, a bill to require the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to improve services for survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

S. 2260

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2260, a bill to establish and fund an Opioids and STOP Initiative to expand, intensify, and coordinate fundamental, translational, and clinical research of the National Institutes of Health with respect to opioid abuse, the understanding of pain, and the discovery and development of safer and more effective treatments and preventive interventions for pain.

S. 2334

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Louisiana

(Mr. CASSIDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2334, a bill to amend title 17, United States Code, to provide clarity with respect to, and to modernize, the licensing system for musical works under section 115 of that title, to ensure fairness in the establishment of certain rates and fees under sections 114 and 115 of that title, and for other purposes.

S. 2387

At the request of Mrs. CAPITO, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2387, a bill to provide better care and outcomes for Americans living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and their caregivers while accelerating progress toward prevention strategies, disease modifying treatments, and, ultimately, a cure.

S. 2586

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2586, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to increase the ability of a State to administer a permit program under that Act, and for other purposes.

S. 2587

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2587, a bill to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to establish a program to allow States to assume certain Federal responsibilities under that Act with respect to agency actions applicable to highway projects within the States, and for other purposes.

S. 2588

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2588, a bill to amend title 54, United States Code, to establish a program to allow States to assume certain Federal responsibilities under that title with respect to agency actions applicable to highway projects within the States, and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 57

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) and the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 57, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to "Indirect Auto Lending and Compliance with the Equal Credit Opportunity Act".

S. RES. 168

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 168, a resolution supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia.

S. RES. 286

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the names of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL), the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 286, a resolution supporting the role of the United States in ensuring children in the poorest countries have access to a quality education through the Global Partnership for Education.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 457—TO AUTHORIZE TESTIMONY AND REPRESENTATION IN KUWAIT & GULF LINK TRANSPORT CO., ET AL. V. JOHN DOE, ET AL. (CT. OF COMMON PLEAS, CUMBERLAND COUNTY, PA.)

Mr. MCCONNELL (for himself and Mr. SCHUMER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 457

Whereas, in the case of *Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport Co., et al. v. John Doe, et al.*, Case No. 2012-1820—CIVIL TERM, pending in the Court of Common Pleas for Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, deposition testimony has been subpoenaed from Richard Goldberg, a former employee in the office of Senator Mark Kirk, relating to his official responsibilities;

Whereas, by the privileges of the Senate of the United States and Rule XI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, no evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may, by the judicial or administrative process, be taken from such control or possession but by permission of the Senate;

Whereas, pursuant to sections 703(a) and 704(a)(2) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, 2 U.S.C. §§ 288b(a) and 288c(a)(2), the Senate may direct its counsel to represent current and former employees of the Senate with respect to any subpoena, order, or request for testimony relating to their official responsibilities; and

Whereas, when it appears that evidence under the control or in the possession of the Senate may promote the administration of justice, the Senate will take such action as will promote the ends of justice consistent with the privileges of the Senate: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That Richard Goldberg is authorized to testify in the case of *Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport Co., et al. v. John Doe, et al.*, except concerning matters for which a privilege should be asserted.

SEC. 2. The Senate Legal Counsel is authorized to represent Richard Goldberg in connection with the testimony authorized in section one of this resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on behalf of myself and the distinguished Democratic leader, Mr. SCHUMER, I send to the desk a resolution authorizing testimony and representation by the Senate Legal Counsel, and ask for its immediate consideration.

Mr. President, this resolution concerns a civil case pending in the Court

of Common Pleas for Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, in which defense contracting logistics firms based in Kuwait have sued competitor firms for defamation and tortious interference for allegedly sending false emails to various U.S. government agencies harming the plaintiff companies. The complaint asserts that in 2011 representatives of the defendants communicated allegedly harmful allegations to a number of government agencies and officials, including an employee in the office of then-Senator Mark Kirk. Senator Kirk forwarded the information for investigation by the Defense and Treasury Departments.

The plaintiffs issued a subpoena seeking deposition testimony from the former Senate staffer about his communications with the defendants' representatives about these allegations. Senator Kirk would like to cooperate by providing relevant and unprivileged staff testimony about these communications.

Accordingly, consistent with the rules of the Senate and Senate practice, this resolution would authorize former Senator Kirk's staffer to testify at a deposition. The resolution would also authorize the Senate Legal Counsel to represent Senator Kirk's former employee in connection with his testimony.

SENATE RESOLUTION 458—DESIGNATING APRIL 11, 2018, AS THE "SESQUICENTENNIAL OF CONNECTICUT'S NAVY INSTALLATION"

Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself and Mr. MURPHY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 458

Whereas the Navy Installation of Connecticut, regarded as Naval Submarine Base New London, had its beginning as a naval yard and storage depot on April 11, 1868;

Whereas the people of Connecticut made the installation possible when a deed of gift from the State of Connecticut and city of New London was signed, conveyed, and presented to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles;

Whereas the Navy Installation of Connecticut was first used for laying up inactive ships, then for refueling small naval ships traveling through the waters of New England, and ultimately as the first submarine base of the United States Navy;

Whereas October 18, 1915, marked the arrival at the Navy Installation of Connecticut of the submarines G-1, G-2, and G-4 under the care of the tender USS *Ozark* (Monitor No. 7), soon followed by the arrival of submarines E-1, D-1, and D-3 under the care of the tender USS *Tonopah* (Monitor No. 8), and on November 2, 1915, the arrival of the first ship built as a submarine tender, the USS *Fulton* (AS-1);

Whereas, on June 21, 1916, Commander Yates Stirling, Jr., assumed the command of the newly designated Naval Submarine Base New London, the New London Submarine Flotilla, and the Submarine School;

Whereas the property of Naval Submarine Base New London expanded during the course of the involvement of the United

States in World War I, with Congress approving more than \$1,000,000 for real estate and facilities expansion, which created 81 buildings to support 1,400 men and 20 submarines by the end of World War I;

Whereas the second largest expansion of Naval Submarine Base New London occurred during World War II when the submarine force exponentially grew in size, and the installation enlarged from 112 acres to 497 acres to accommodate the thousands of personnel that serviced the growing fleet;

Whereas the nuclear power age following World War II ushered technological advancements in submarine development with the advent of nuclear powered submarines and the arrival of the USS *Nautilus* (SSN-571), the first nuclear powered vessel in the world, when it was commissioned in 1954 at Naval Submarine Base New London;

Whereas the USS *George Washington* (SSBN-598), the first nuclear ballistic submarine of the United States Navy, created further changes at Naval Submarine Base New London when it was commissioned there in 1959;

Whereas, in 2018, Naval Submarine Base New London extends along the east side of the Thames River, occupies approximately 687 acres, and houses more than 160 major facilities and more than 15 nuclear submarines;

Whereas Naval Submarine Base New London supports fleet readiness by providing quality service and facilities to its fleet, fighters, and families;

Whereas the mission of Naval Submarine Base New London is—

(1) to homeport and put submarines to sea; and

(2) to support the Submarine Center of Excellence, which trains submariners to take submarines to sea;

Whereas nearly every submariner in the United States Navy will be stationed at Naval Submarine Base New London for training, with a potential tour of duty in one of the attack submarines homeported at the installation, or with a pre-commissioning unit for a new submarine under construction at General Dynamics Electric Boat Shipyard in Groton, Connecticut;

Whereas Naval Submarine Base New London is home to more than 70 tenant commands and activities including—

(1) the Undersea Warfighting Development Center;

(2) the Submarine Learning Center;

(3) the Naval Submarine School;

(4) the Naval Submarine Medical Research Laboratory; and

(5) the Naval Undersea Medical Institute;

Whereas Naval Submarine Base New London is one of the largest employers in southeastern Connecticut and employs more than 9,500 active duty, reserve, and civilian personnel; and

Whereas Naval Submarine Base New London will always be regarded as the first submarine base of the United States Navy and the home of the submarine force: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates April 11, 2018, as the “Sesquicentennial of Connecticut’s Navy Installation”;

(2) commends the longstanding dedication and contribution to the Navy by the people of Connecticut, both through the initial deed of gift that established the Navy Installation of Connecticut, and through their ongoing commitment to support the mission and people assigned to the installation, presently known as Naval Submarine Base New London;

(3) honors the sailors and submariners who have trained and served at the Navy Installation of Connecticut throughout its 150-year

history in support of the naval and undersea superiority of the United States;

(4) recognizes the indispensable role Naval Submarine Base New London plays in fortifying the national security of the United States at a time when adversaries seek to challenge the United States; and

(5) pledges continued support for the operation of Naval Submarine Base New London for years to come.

SENATE RESOLUTION 459—RECOGNIZING “BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK” TO BRING NATIONAL ATTENTION TO THE MATERNAL HEALTH CARE CRISIS IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF REDUCING THE RATE OF MATERNAL MORTALITY AND MORBIDITY AMONG BLACK WOMEN

Ms. HARRIS (for herself, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. WARREN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. RES. 459

Whereas according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black mothers in the United States die at 3 to 4 times the rate of White mothers;

Whereas Black women in the United States suffer from life-threatening pregnancy complications twice as often as White women;

Whereas United States maternal mortality rates are the highest in the developed world and are increasing rapidly;

Whereas the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate among affluent countries because of the disproportionate death rate of Black mothers;

Whereas the premature delivery rate among Black women is 49 percent higher than the rate among all other women;

Whereas Black women are twice as likely to suffer from severe maternal morbidity than White women;

Whereas high rates of maternal mortality among Black women span across income and education levels, as well as socioeconomic status;

Whereas racial disparities exist across income and education levels;

Whereas structural racism, gender oppression, and social determinants of health inequities experienced by Black women in the United States significantly contribute to the disproportionately high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity among Black women;

Whereas race and racism play an integral role in maternal health outcomes, care, and policy;

Whereas fair distribution of resources, especially with regard to reproductive health care services and maternal health programming, is critical to closing the maternal health racial disparity gap; and

Whereas an investment must be made in Black women’s maternity care and in policies that support and promote affordable, comprehensive, and holistic maternal health care that is free from gender and racial discrimination: Now, therefore, be it

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate recognizes—

(1) that Black women are experiencing high, disproportionate rates of maternal mortality and morbidity in the United States;

(2) that the alarmingly high rates of maternal mortality among Black women is unacceptable;

(3) that Congress must work toward ensuring that the Black community has adequate housing, transportation equity, nutritious food, clean water, environments free from toxins, fair treatment within the criminal justice system, safety and freedom from violence, a living wage, and equal economic opportunity;

(4) that in order to improve maternal health outcomes, Congress must fully support and encourage policies grounded in the human rights framework that addresses Black maternal health inequity;

(5) that Black women must be active participants in the policy decisions that impact their lives;

(6) that “Black Maternal Health Week” is an opportunity to increase attention of the state of Black maternal health in the United States, amplify the voices of Black women and families, serve as a national platform for Black-women-led entities and efforts on maternal health, and enhance community organizing on Black maternal health; and

(7) the significance of April 11 through 17, 2018, as “Black Maternal Health Week”.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I have 14 requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today’s session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 10:15 a.m. to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing on the following nominations: Kirsten Dawn Madison, of Florida, to be an Assistant Secretary (International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs), and Thomas J. Hushek, of Wisconsin, to be Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan, both of the Department of State.

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing on the following nominations: Patrick Fuchs, of Wisconsin, and Michelle A. Schultz, of Pennsylvania, both to be a Member of the Surface Transportation Board, Department of Transportation, and Rebecca Kelly Slaughter, of Maryland, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner.

COMMITTEE HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to

meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled “The Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018.”

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled, “FEMA: Prioritizing a Culture of Preparedness.”

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Indian Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 2:30 p.m. to conduct a hearing entitled “The President’s FY2019 budget Request for Indian Programs”.

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Indian Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 2:30 p.m. to conduct a hearing on S. 1250 and S. 2515.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing on the following nominations: Mark Jeremy Bennett, of Hawaii, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit, Nancy E. Brasel, and Eric C. Tostrud, both to be a United States District Judge for the District of Minnesota, Robert R. Summerhays, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Louisiana, and Wendy Vitter, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS’ AFFAIRS

The Committee on Veterans’ Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 2:30 p.m. to conduct a hearing on the following nominations: Paul R. Lawrence, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Benefits, and Joseph L. Falvey, Jr., of Michigan, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND
CAPABILITIES

The Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities of the Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS AND MANAGEMENT
SUPPORT

The Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support of the Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 2:30 p.m. to conduct a hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

The Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 2:30 p.m. to conduct a hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE,
CUSTOMS, AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

The Subcommittee on International Trade, Customs, and Global Competitiveness of the Committee on Finance is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 2:30 p.m. to conduct a hearing entitled “Market Access Challenges in China.”

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME AND TERRORISM

The Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism of the Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 2:30 p.m. to conduct a hearing entitled “Defeating Fentanyl: Addressing the Deadliest Drugs Fueling the Opioid Crisis.”

RECOGNIZING THE 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF
OSWALDO PAYA SARDINAS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 357, S. Res. 224.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 224) recognizing the 5th anniversary of the death of Oswaldo Paya Sardinas, and commemorating his legacy and commitment to democratic values and principles.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment and an amendment to the preamble and an amendment to the title.

(Strike all after the resolving clause and insert the part printed in italic.)

(Strike the preamble and insert the part printed in italic.)

Whereas Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1952 and became a nonviolent critic of the communist government as a teenager, resulting in 3 years of imprisonment in 1969 at a work camp in Cuba, formerly known as “Isla de Pinos”;

Whereas, in 1988, Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas founded the Christian Liberation Movement that called for peaceful civil disobedience against the rule of the Communist Party of Cuba and advocated for civil liberties;

Whereas, in 1992 and 1997, attempts by Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas to run as a candidate for the National Assembly of People’s Power were rejected by Cuban authorities;

Whereas, in 1998, Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas and other leaders of the Christian Liberation Movement established the Varela Project in order to circulate a legal proposal to advocate for democratic political reforms within Cuba, including the establishment of freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, free elections, freedom to start private businesses, and amnesty for political prisoners;

Whereas, in 2002, the Varela Project delivered a petition to the National Assembly of People’s Power with 11,020 signatures from Cuban citizens calling for a referendum on safeguarding basic freedoms, an end to one-party rule, and citing Article 88 of the Constitution of Cuba that allows Cuban citizens to propose laws if the proposal is made by at least 10,000 Cuban citizens who are eligible to vote;

Whereas, in 2003, Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas delivered the petition to the National Assembly of People’s Power with an additional 14,000 signatures, establishing the biggest nonviolent campaign to oppose the Communist Party of Cuba;

Whereas, in March 2003, the crackdown on Cuban dissidents by the Government of Cuba, referred to as the “Black Spring”, led to the imprisonment of 75 individuals, including 25 members of the Varela Project and 40 members of the Christian Liberation Movement, and the formation of the Ladies in White movement by the wives of the imprisoned activists;

Whereas, in 2007, Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas called on the National Assembly of People’s Power to grant amnesty to nonviolent political prisoners and to allow Cubans to travel freely without a government permit;

Whereas, in 2009, Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas developed a Call for the National Dialogue;

Whereas petitions and calls by Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas to the National Assembly of People’s Power were repeatedly dismissed and disparaged by the Government of Cuba;

Whereas Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, his family, and friends endured years of harassment and intimidation for the peaceful political activism of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas;

Whereas Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas has been formally recognized in the past for his dedication to the promotion of human rights and democracy, including by receiving the Homo Homini Award in 1999, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2002, the W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award from the United States National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in 2003, and being nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Václav Havel, the former President of the Czech Republic, in 2005;

Whereas, on July 22, 2012, Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas and Harold Cepero, a fellow pro-democracy activist, died in a troubling car crash in Granma Province, Cuba, after being followed by government agents;

Whereas the Government of Cuba has failed to conduct a credible investigation into the car crash that led to the death of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas;

Whereas the trial and conviction of Angel Carronero, a youth leader of the People’s Party who was visiting Cuba and driving the car at the time of the crash, did not include testimony from key witnesses, and did not resolve questions about whether another car was involved or whether Mr. Carronero was coerced by the Government of Cuba into signing a false statement of guilt;

Whereas, in 2012, the United States Senate unanimously passed Senate Resolution 525, 112th Congress, agreed to July 31, 2012, honoring the life and legacy of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas;

Whereas, in 2013, a number of United States Senators and the United States Department of State called for an impartial, third-party investigation by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States into the circumstances surrounding the death of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas;

Whereas, in 2013, Angel Carronero spoke in detail during an interview with the Washington Post about being hit by another car during the crash, being mistreated and coerced by Cuban authorities following the crash, and being made the “scapegoat” by the Government of Cuba for the death of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas;

Whereas the dissidents of the “Black Spring” have been released from prison, but the Government of Cuba continues to suppress, assault, and detain those peacefully expressing political beliefs contrary to or critical of the regime; and

Whereas the 2016 Human Rights Report on Cuba by the United States Department of State cited ongoing human rights abuses by the Government of Cuba, namely “the abridgement of the ability of citizens to choose their government; the use of government threats, physical

assault, intimidation, and violent government-organized counter protests against peaceful dissent; and harassment and detentions to prevent free expression and peaceful assembly.” Now, therefore, be it

Resolved,
That the Senate—

(1) recognizes and commemorates the legacy of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas on the 6th anniversary of his death on July 22, 2018;

(2) honors the commitment of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas to democratic values and principles;

(3) calls on the Government of Cuba to allow an impartial, third-party investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas;

(4) urges the United States to continue to support policies and programs that promote respect for human rights and democratic principles in Cuba in a manner that is consistent with the aspirations of the Cuban people;

(5) urges the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States to continue reporting on human rights issues in Cuba, and to request a visit to Cuba in order to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas; and

(6) calls on the Government of Cuba to cease violating human rights and to begin providing democratic political freedoms to Cuban citizens, including freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, free elections, freedom to start private businesses, and amnesty for political prisoners.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I further ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment to the resolution be agreed to, the resolution, as amended, be agreed to, the committee-reported amendment to the preamble be agreed to, the preamble, as amended, be agreed to, the committee-reported amendment to the title be agreed to, and the motions to consider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 224), as amended, was agreed to.

The committee-reported amendment to the preamble in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

The committee-reported title amendment was agreed to, as follows:

Amend the title so as to read: “A resolution recognizing the 6th anniversary of the death of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, and commemorating his legacy and commitment to democratic values and principles.”

AUTHORIZING TESTIMONY AND REPRESENTATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 457, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 457) to authorize testimony and representation in Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport Co., et al. v. John Doe, et al.

(Ct. of Common Pleas, Cumberland County, Pa.)

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 457) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today’s RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

SESQUICENTENNIAL OF CONNECTICUT’S NAVY INSTALLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 458, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 458) designating April 11, 2018, as the “Sesquicentennial of Connecticut’s Navy Installation.”

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 458) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today’s RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

OHIO FIRST RESPONDER APPRECIATION WEEK

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I wish to talk tonight about the brave Ohioans who dedicate themselves every day to protecting all of the rest of us; that is, our first responders. This week is Ohio First Responders Week, a week of appreciation, the theme being “Bringing Help, Bringing Hope.” Well said.

Police officers, firefighters, EMS professionals, and other first responders

put themselves in harm’s way for us every single day. They risk their own safety to care for others. They wake up every day, put on their uniforms, and carry out their duties with an unwavering commitment to their communities and a pledge to protect those around them.

This morning, we had our weekly Buckeye Coffee. We had people from all over Ohio there. Sure enough, a bunch of first responders showed up. It was the EMS chiefs association, and we had an opportunity to talk with them about what they are doing every day.

Of course, EMS help with regard to traffic accidents, gunshot wounds, and so on. But one of the new challenges they face that is taking an enormous amount of their time and effort is the opioid crisis. I would bet if you go to your firehouse and ask them, the first responders in our communities are responding more to overdose runs than they are to fires. This is one example of where they are on the frontlines dealing with this issue and are applying Narcan, the miracle drug that reverses the effects of an overdose to save lives.

We appreciate them, and the service and commitment of these first responders is needed now more than ever. I urge all Ohioans this week to demonstrate their thanks to first responders. If you live in a community that is having an event, which a number are, I hope you will attend the event. If not, if you cross paths with a first responder, thank him, thank her, and tell them we appreciate what they are doing.

I know I speak for the entire Buckeye State when I say that we are grateful for the work our first responders do every single day, and they will continue, as the theme says this year, to bring help and hope to all of us. We thank them.

STOP ENABLING SEX TRAFFICKERS ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. On another topic, Mr. President, today is a big day in the fight against sex trafficking.

I just got back a couple of hours ago from a meeting at the White House where the President of the United States signed legislation that we have been working on for several years to be able to push back against the sex trafficking that is occurring online. It was very emotional. We had a lot of survivors, victims of sex trafficking, who were there.

One of them was standing next to the President. When he signed the bill, he asked whether she wanted to say anything. Fighting back tears, Yvonne Ambrose said: I want to tell you about my daughter.

She told the President about her 16-year-old daughter who was trafficked on backpage.com, a website that has most of the commercial sex traffic, and how she got a call on Christmas Eve a couple of years ago. Her daughter had been murdered. As she said, no mother

should ever have to accept or take that call.

She talked about how her daughter got dragged into this issue of trafficking and said that she hopes the legislation we passed will be able to save other daughters, other granddaughters, other Americans who otherwise would become part of the sex trafficking tragedy we have seen unfold in our country.

This legislation came out of experiences we have all had when we go back home. We talk to victims and survivors, and we have learned over the past several years that trafficking is actually on the increase in this country, in this century. People think: Well, trafficking is going on, but it happens in Africa or it happens in Asia or it happens in Latin America. It happens here. It probably happens in your community. Unfortunately, it happens in my State of Ohio way too frequently.

Through our investigation and studies of this, increasingly, we heard about online trafficking. Survivors have told me: ROB, this has moved from the street corner to the smartphone.

Groups, including the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, showed that from 2005 to 2015 there was an 800-percent increase in reports of trafficking. All of the experts agree that there is an increase in trafficking, and all agree that most of this is attributable directly to one thing—the movement to the ruthless efficiency of online selling of women and children.

One website in particular kept coming up—backpage.com, which I mentioned earlier. So we launched an investigation over a 2-year period in the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which I chair. We decided to dig deep and find out what was going on, why it was happening, and what the nature of this was. What we found was shocking.

Senator CLAIRE McCASKILL of Missouri is the ranking member of the committee. She and I did this investigation, together with our committee, and we issued the report together. It was bipartisan from the start. I would say it was even nonpartisan, and it is to this day.

The investigation involved asking backpage.com for a lot of information that they were unwilling to give. We had to subpoena them, and they still refused to provide the information. We had to come to this Chamber, to the U.S. Senate, and get a vote of the entire Senate—the first time in 21 years we had to do this—to be able to enforce these subpoenas. Every Member of this body got engaged and involved in this, and by the end of the process, we had a unanimous vote from the Senate to say: Yes, you should be able to force people to provide relevant information to the committees that are doing oversight, like ours.

We got permission to enforce it, which meant potential criminal sanctions, and they still wouldn't give us

information. They fought us at the district level. They lost there. Then they fought us at the circuit level. We fought and won there. Then they fought us at the Supreme Court of the United States. We had to take it all the way to the Supreme Court.

Then, yes, they did provide us with about a million documents. They still refused to testify. They took the Fifth. But they did provide us with the documents because they had to under the threat of penalty of law. Through those documents, we found out something shocking, which was that not only were they selling women and girls online and making a lot of money doing it, but they were purposely selling underage girls and trying to hide the fact that they were doing it. Think about that. They were not only selling girls and women online, but they were taking ads for underage girls, knowing they were underage and running the ads anyway.

In fact, they would go to the people who were trying to place the ads and say: You know what, you need to change this word. You can't use the word "schoolgirl" because this indicates the girl is underage. You can't use the word "cheerleader" because that shows that she is underage. You can't use the word "Lolita," which is a novel about a young girl being trafficked and an older man.

You can't use the description of the girl and put her age in there if she is underage, but they want your ad anyway. They edited the ads, so they were complicit in this.

You would think a prosecutor would be able to go after these people, right? They are engaged in illegal activity online. If that activity were happening offline, on the street corner in your community, it would be illegal. When the prosecutors went after these people online and when the victims of trafficking, like the woman I talked about earlier whose 16-year-old daughter was murdered while she was being trafficked on backpage—when they went after backpage in that case, they were unsuccessful. Why? Because they said: Yes, Desiree died. Yes, Desiree would have a lawsuit here, as well as other women and families who came to testify before us. Kubiiki Pride is one, and her daughter was there today. But there is a Federal law that says: We, the courts, can't even take up this case because the Federal law provides an immunity, a shield, to these websites. Unbelievable.

We had a court in Sacramento last year actually tell Congress, basically: Please change this law. They said: We can't stop this exploitation—this alleged exploitation of women and girls. We can't stop it because Congress has passed a law that protects these websites. No one can go after them.

The more we learned, the more we dug, the more we found out what was really going on, we determined that our report, which you can see here—and I encourage you to check out this

report. You can find it online. "Backpage" is the search, and look on Portman.senate.gov. Go to Portman.senate.gov, and you will see this report, if you are interested in it. The summaries will help. What it says, basically, is that they are trafficking these individuals, and they know they are doing it. Yet they are immune.

Once we determined that was our issue, we determined it was time for us to figure out legislation to actually change our Federal law that was permitting it. The culmination of that was today when the President of the United States signed that into law.

For a couple of years, we had quite a legislative struggle because there were a lot of individuals who said: Well, you can't touch these internet companies because of this law.

The law was passed 21 years ago, at the infancy of the internet. It was well-intentioned, but I do not believe that any Member of this body intended, when they passed that law, to say that you should be able to traffic people online knowingly and not pay some consequence for it, not be accountable for it.

We made a very narrow carve-out for trafficking of individuals online. We made sure that it was consistent with the Federal criminal law that was already in place if you were to do it offline. We ensured that there was a Good Samaritan provision so that if a website was in good faith trying to clean up its site and edit its site and get this information off of it, they would not be liable. That Good Samaritan or safe harbor provision was in our legislation. We proceeded to get it passed.

We had a lot of pushback, particularly from the tech community—not everybody in the tech community but certain people who believe strongly that this legislation was somehow a threat to internet freedom. I do not believe that to this day. I believe it is targeted, it is responsible, and it certainly is an issue on which you would think everybody would agree.

Just because you are online does not mean you are not accountable and responsible for selling people online—again, in the context of more and more trafficking in this country. As you look into it, you determine that is because of this online presence, the ruthless efficiency of the online selling of women and children.

We were able to bring it to the floor for a vote after a committee process. We went through the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. We went through the Commerce Committee. At the end of the day, we got a vote in this Chamber of 97 to 2. That rarely happens around here—rarely, if ever. Again, today, finally, the President signed the bill.

It looks like it was easier to do at the end. I will tell you, a couple of years ago, we were told: This will never happen. You can't make this happen. You can't beat us. We have a lot of

power. We have a lot lobbyists. We have a lot of abilities to stop you in the committee.

Yet, through persuasion and, frankly, through the personal testimony of victims and survivors who were willing to come forward and courageously share their stories, we were able to prevail. Today, it was a victory—not for this body, not for the legislative process, but it was a victory for those victims and those survivors.

One mom told me today: This means my granddaughter won't have to worry about this issue. It means that when my kid goes to the mall, I don't have to worry as much about what might happen, who might try to take her into this web of trafficking.

My hope is that this legislation will be able to curb the online trafficking in a significant way. We are already seeing the results of that. I was told today, in fact, that websites that trafficked people online are shutting down all over America because they don't want to be sued, because they are losing their immunity. It is not affecting the freedom of the internet, but it is affecting those evil websites that were engaged in criminal activity and hiding behind section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. I am told that as many as 80 percent of those trafficking websites have shut down just in the last several days because they don't want to be subject to these lawsuits.

We also had something else that was very interesting happen this week. The Department of Justice went after backpage.com. They actually indicted seven individuals. If you look at the indictment, which I have here—you can find this by going on the Justice Department website, I am sure; it is in the district court in Arizona—you will see that they named seven individuals. These are the same seven individuals we named in our report. They also used the information from our report about the fact that backpage was changing ads, editing ads. In other words, they were knowingly allowing ads about underage girls to be run because they wanted the profits. That is exactly what is talked about in this indictment.

The work of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations was very important because it enabled us to provide to the Justice Department information they used for these indictments. We provided that information 10 months ago, and the indictments came out in the last several days.

My hope is that now, because this law passed, we will see a lot more prosecutions because we have now allowed State prosecutors and attorneys general around the country and local prosecutors, district attorneys, and county prosecutors—who are the ones who ultimately are going to be much more effective and more able to go after this kind of activity—to do so.

Backpage has been in existence for 14 years. Until this week, the Federal

Justice Department had not made these indictments. It was great that they did it. It is also about time, in my view. Now we have this tool to allow other prosecutors to be more aggressive, to do what should have been done years ago—to save the lives of so many girls, women, and boys whose lives have been taken off track because of the trauma associated with this. We also now have the opportunity for the victims themselves to file lawsuits.

This is already having a chilling effect. In other words, it is already taking down these websites that don't want to be sued. They know our legislation—although very narrowly crafted—applies to them because they are knowingly involved in, supporting, assisting sex trafficking.

I think this is a victory for the victims, the survivors, and, maybe most importantly, the potential future victims. It is also an opportunity for us to celebrate something that this Chamber accomplished in a bipartisan way, going through the right process, doing the research, coming up with the facts, narrowly crafting legislation that works, which doesn't have a negative impact, but in fact, it helps to change behavior. We are already seeing it.

My hope is that we will do more of that around here. We have many other issues to address. Earlier, we talked about the opioid crisis. Congress passed some good legislation, but we need to do more.

We have an issue with getting people back to work who are in the shadows of our economy, some of whom have a felony record, some of whom are addicted to opioids, some of whom don't have the skills to engage in a modern economy. That is a huge challenge. To me, it is unbelievable that we have so many people who are in our country but not in our labor force. Our labor force participation rate, as economists call it, is as low as it has ever been for men in the history of our country. There are probably 9 million men between 25 and 55 who are able-bodied and not working today. That is wrong.

There are many issues we need to address. If we can do those studies in the same way and come up with sensible solutions based on research, based on good practices, keep it not just bipartisan but nonpartisan, and say: Let's get the politics out of this, and let's try to figure out how to help people—which is our job around here; that is what we were elected to do—maybe we can make progress in a number of different areas.

Today, at the signing ceremony for this legislation, the SESTA legislation, I had the opportunity to see a friend of mine, Theresa Flores, who runs a group called Save Our Adolescents From Prostitution, S.O.A.P. the reason she uses the acronym S.O.A.P. is that Theresa, who is a survivor—she was trafficked years ago and now has a passion for this issue. She calls her organization S.O.A.P. because she goes to major events around the country, sporting

events, where there tend to be an increase in trafficking. What she does is she goes to the hotels and asks them to put a bar of soap in the bathroom. On that bar of soap, she has listed the national hotline for sex trafficking. A girl can call that number and have someone come rescue her, and she can escape from her trafficker.

That simple act of making these bars of soap and getting hotels to place them in these bathrooms has been remarkably effective. Think about it. These girls or women may have no other time where they have privacy, where they don't have the trafficker with them, where they are not feeling under duress. When they have their private moment in the bathroom, they see the number. Many of them have called that number and have been able to escape this life and get back to a productive life, with treatment, with support, with the kind of longer term recovery that is needed to get through the trauma, to get through, in many cases, the drug addiction. Drugs are involved in this, as you can imagine, as a way to make these women, girls, and boys dependent. In fact, in Ohio, unfortunately, that is a common practice, is that drugs are involved.

Theresa Flores has done something incredible. She has channeled her frustration and all of the trauma she went through into something very constructive. She was there today, and her comment to me was that, by this act, by passing this law, we are going to save lives, and we are going to enable future generations to not go down the tragic and dark road she had to go down. That should make us feel good in this Chamber. It should make us feel good for those whose lives can be helped through this and for those victims to at least have the opportunity to have their day in court, to be able to seek justice.

I thank the President of the United States for signing the legislation today. I thank Ivanka Trump in particular for her support on the legislation all along the way. I hope this legislation will be a model for others to come.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2018

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:15 a.m., Thursday, April 12; 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. Finally, I ask that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Pizzella nomination under the previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?
Without objection, it is so ordered.

the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate April 11, 2018:

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:15 A.M.
TOMORROW

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:54 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, April 12, 2018, at 9:15 a.m.

NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD

JOHN F. RING, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD FOR THE TERM OF FIVE YEARS EXPIRING DECEMBER 16, 2022.

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before