

from Barbara Bush about what I had said about her son, George W. Bush.

Not many of us think how difficult it must be to be the spouse of a President of the United States with all that one goes through, but think how much harder it must also be to be the mother of a President of the United States and the mother of another distinguished son who was Governor of a large State and who ran for President of the United States. Barbara Bush was the anchor of her family, and a very successful and remarkable family it was.

I was Education Secretary for President Bush in 1991 when the National Literacy Act was enacted. Let's use Barbara's own words to define the event. She wrote in her memoir, "I must say I got more credit than I deserve."

I don't agree with that, but she continued:

I heard that George was going to give the pen to me, but before he could, Senator Simon spoke up and said, "That pen ought to go to Barbara." I donated it to the George Bush Presidential Library Center. In the end, however it's not pens and pictures that count; it's the National Literacy Act that really counts. It was the first piece of legislation—and to date, the only one—ever enacted specifically for literacy with the goal of ensuring that every American adult acquires the basic literacy skills necessary to achieve the greatest possible satisfaction professionally and personally. But even more than that, the act seeks to strengthen our nation by giving us more productive workers and informed citizens.

In his biography of President George H.W. Bush, John Meacham wrote of a "generational controversy," in his words, that Barbara Bush endured in May of 1990. She was invited to Wellesley College to speak at graduation and receive an honorary degree, but she was being criticized by Wellesley's young women, as President Bush put in his own diary—these are President Bush's words—"because she hasn't made it on her own—she's where she is because she's her husband's wife. What's wrong with the fact that she's a good mother," President Bush wrote in his diary, "a good wife, great volunteer, great leader for literacy and other fine causes? Nothing. But to listen to these elitist kids there is."

Meacham writes:

Mrs. Bush invited [Mrs.] Gorbachev along with her to Wellesley. There, [she] confronted the issues of work versus family and the role of women head-on, delivering a well-received commencement address.

She put the audience at ease early on by saying: One day, I am sure that someone in this audience will grow up to become a spouse of the President of the United States, and I wish him well.

Meacham continues:

"Maybe we should adjust faster, maybe we should adjust slower," she told the graduates. "But whatever the era, whatever the times, one thing will never change: Fathers and mothers, if you have children—they must come first. You must read to your children, and you must hug your children, and you must love your children. Your success as a family, our success as a society depends

not on what happens in the White House, but on what happens inside your house."

Barbara Bush said that to the Wellesley graduates in 1990.

The country is expressing to the Bush family, as I am trying to today, our great respect for Barbara Bush's life.

President Bush, George H.W. Bush, has sent a response to those of us who sent our condolences, and I would like to close with the President's own words about his wife Barbara. This is what George H.W. Bush said:

I always knew Barbara was the most beloved woman in the world, and in fact I used to tease her that I had a complex about that fact. But the truth is the outpouring of love and friendship being directed at The Enforcer is lifting us all up. We have faith she is in heaven, and we know life will go on—as she would have it. So cross the Bushes off your worry list.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask for the yeas and nays on the pending nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

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

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. LEE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 55, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 79 Ex.]

YEAS—55

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

NAYS—43

Baldwin	Cortez Masto	Klobuchar
Bennet	Durbin	Leahy
Blumenthal	Feinstein	Markey
Booker	Gillibrand	McCaskill
Brown	Harris	Menendez
Cantwell	Hassan	Merkley
Cardin	Heinrich	Murphy
Carper	Hirono	Murray
Casey	Kaine	Peters
Coons	King	Reed

Sanders	Stabenow	Warren
Schatz	Tester	Whitehouse
Schumer	Udall	Wyden
Shaheen	Van Hollen	
Smith	Warner	

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.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, over the past 24 hours we have learned of a high-level meeting between Director Pompeo—Mike Pompeo, the President's nominee to become Secretary of State—and Kim Jong Un, the leader—the tyrant leader—of North Korea, who has threatened to use nuclear weapons not only against our allies but against the United States and has a growing capability in his efforts to do just that.

We have also seen incredible partisan obstruction threatened on his nomination. The absurd levels of partisanship in this Chamber are a stain on our institution. We see it at every level of nominations, from ambassadorships to commissions to boards. Now we see it at the level of the Secretary of State, a position that will be instrumental in denuclearizing the North Korean regime.

Director Pompeo had his confirmation hearing last week before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We now know that his testimony at this committee hearing took place after he had visited Kim Jong Un, and in this committee hearing, he made it very clear that our goal remains the complete and verifiable irreversible denuclearization. That is the stated goal, confirmed by Director Pompeo: the complete and verifiable irreversible denuclearization of North Korea. Yet we now have people threatening to stop this nomination at a critical time when we face a nuclear threat that is the greatest this country has seen since the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle would decide to deny this country its top State Department diplomat.

Let me describe what some of our colleagues have said who have claimed now that they are going to vote against Mike Pompeo for Secretary of State but who, just a few months back, voted to confirm Mike Pompeo. One of my colleagues who is voting against Director Pompeo for Secretary of State has admitted that Director Pompeo has been a "solid manager" of the CIA, saying:

I voted for him to head the CIA and don't wish I had that vote back. I think he has a background in intel and has been a solid manager there.

Another colleague, who tried to criticize Director Pompeo's diversity policies at the CIA, was met with this response from Director Pompeo, who explained at the hearing that those types of complaints decreased under his leadership. Mike Pompeo stated: "The number of—we call them 'no fear complaints'—the statutory requirement decreased from 2016 to 2017 by 40 percent."

Director Pompeo further explained: "I'm proud of the record . . . the work that my team has done on this."

So concerns about diversity policies was refuted at the committee hearing.

Another Senator seems worried that Mike Pompeo is conducting diplomacy and said: "Pompeo is the wrong person to be engaging in diplomacy."

The nominee to be Secretary of State is the wrong person to be conducting diplomacy? Perhaps we need somebody working at the Department of Transportation. Maybe that is the person they want to conduct diplomacy. Building interstates—maybe that is who they think should be conducting diplomacy. I would rather have somebody who has been nominated to be Secretary of State to be conducting diplomacy—somebody who has an outstanding background in the military, somebody who stood in Europe during the height of the Cold War, standing on the iron wall.

This is a time when we ought to be doing everything we can to confirm a Secretary of State—somebody who has had meetings already with Kim Jong Un, who has an understanding of what has to happen to achieve what Kim Jong Un has said—denuclearization—to achieve what is the goal of this country, the stated goal that is already enshrined in law: complete and verifiable irreversible denuclearization.

To simply oppose his nomination for partisan purposes is wrong. We have seen it time and again. What we have is a simple partisan effort to derail the top diplomat, who is already engaged in top-level negotiations about denuclearization with the most significant threat this country has seen since the Cuban Missile Crisis. This country deserves better. Certainly this institution can do better.

We have somebody in Mike Pompeo with a solid background, an understanding of diplomacy and, clearly, the intelligence background through his time at the CIA, and now he would be denied this opportunity simply because of his political affiliation.

This country deserves better.

I urge my colleagues to stop this absurd obstruction and confirm Mike Pompeo, and let's get to work achieving what could be lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. That time is now, and I urge my colleagues to take the opportunity for peace.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the Senate routinely reauthorizes the Coast Guard, much like the Defense act. It shouldn't be a terribly partisan issue. It never has been. We all deeply respect the work of the Coast Guard and recognize the heroism of the men and women who serve in that capacity.

But, unfortunately, the Republican majority slipped a poison pill rider into this otherwise noncontroversial bill that would repeal part of the Clean Water Act. That is why the Coast Guard reauthorization bill failed today.

The rider would prohibit the EPA and the States from regulating pollution and invasive species from the ballast water of large vessels. Instead, it would let the Coast Guard set regulations—an agency that doesn't have the environmental expertise of the EPA. This is a massive change to the Clean Water Act.

The Clean Water Act has worked well for decades because the States drive innovation and enforcement in partnership with the EPA. Under this law, States would no longer be able to do that. The idea of States' rights goes out the window.

I have visited many different parts of my State, in Upstate New York, where invasive species have long plagued communities, or parts of Long Island, where toxic chemicals and algae plague the bays and beaches. They hurt our clamming industry severely. They hurt businesses, they hurt tourism, and they hurt fishing as well—you name it.

We believe the rider will cost many States tens of billions of dollars in lost economic activity. Let me repeat that. Many States will lose tens of billions of dollars in economic activity because of this rider.

Let me also say this about small recreational fishermen—and New York State is third in the number of recreational pleasure boats. No one is proposing to hurt the little guy. That is why Democrats are ready to permanently exempt them from vessel discharge requirements.

Finally, let me make a point about progress and regular order. The vessel discharge provisions in this bill violate the regular order of the Senate. This is a matter under the jurisdiction of the Environment and Public Works Committee, not the Commerce Committee. There was no consultation with the EPW minority on this provision. There were no hearings. Instead, the Commerce Committee inserted these provisions into the Coast Guard reauthorization bill over the objection of many Democrats.

So I will be offering shortly to pass a clean Coast Guard reauthorization bill by unanimous consent. It includes a permanent exemption from discharge

requirements for small recreational fishermen. Democrats are ready to pass this Coast Guard bill as is, without the poison pill environmental rider.

Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment at the desk to the McConnell motion to concur with amendment No. 2232 be called up and made in order; that the amendment be agreed to; that the motion to concur with amendment No. 2232, as amended, be agreed to; and that the motion to refer and all other amendments be withdrawn.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, there is no objection to the Senate considering an amendment to strike the VIDA language. We have offered our colleagues the opportunity to vote on this amendment all week, and if the Senate needs to speak on the question of whether to include the VIDA language in the Coast Guard bill, I would welcome that debate and a fair up-or-down vote. There are many supporters of this language from both sides of the aisle, and I am confident the amendment would be defeated.

I would ask the Senator to revise his request: That the Senate resume consideration of the Coast Guard legislation; that the amendment to strike the VIDA provision be made pending and the Senate vote on the amendment prior to a vote on the motion to concur with further amendment.

So would the Senator be willing to modify?

Mr. SCHUMER. I will not.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The majority leader.

COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today Senate Democrats have filibustered legislation to reauthorize funding for our Coast Guard.

In a dangerous world, the brave men and women of the Coast Guard are always ready for the call, whether it be to interdict drugs, to secure our ports, or to conduct daring maritime rescues. They deserve our support. They don't deserve a filibuster for the sake of political posturing. So let's have a little plain talk about why the bill failed.

Democrats filibustered this legislation because it contains an eminently sensible, bipartisan provision to streamline regulations for the mariners and vessel operators who drive America's maritime economy. It would cut back on duplicative rules and overlapping enforcement and provide a uniform standard that protects the environment and commerce alike.

If this sounds like a commonsense, bipartisan measure, that is because that is exactly what it is. This legislation has been favorably reported by the Commerce Committee six times—six

times—during the last three Congresses, including when our Democratic friends controlled the committee.

You might think that would be enough around here to get a bill passed. But earlier today, a number of the very same Democrats who cosponsored this very legislation, in this very Congress, flip-flopped under partisan pressure and voted against it. In fact, if all of the Senate Democrats who are currently cosponsors of this provision had voted for the bill, the cloture motion would have passed. Let me say that again. If the cosponsors of this measure in this Congress had voted for the bill, the cloture motion would have passed. If only those Democrats who had put their name on this provision would have actually followed through and voted for it, the filibuster would be over.

Look, our constituents sent us here to stand for their interests. In landlocked States like Kentucky and Missouri, thousands and thousands of jobs depend on our inland waterways. In coastal States like Delaware, Washington, and Florida, major ports enable hundreds of billions of dollars of U.S. commerce. Of course, the people of Hawaii rely on shipping for everything from groceries to gasoline.

In all of these States, and elsewhere, I know workers and job creators were excited about the prospect of reform in this area. How do I know that? Because, in several cases, they successfully persuaded their own Democratic Senators to support it—or so it had seemed, until today.

You know, Americans might be forgiven for thinking that persuading their Senator to go out of their way and cosponsor a bill would be the same thing as persuading them to actually vote for it. Apparently, where several of my Democratic colleagues are concerned, that is simply not the case because when party leaders came calling and asked my colleagues to put party-line obstruction politics ahead of their constituents' best interests, they folded. This is what people don't like about this town.

Well, my Democratic friends' political priorities may have shifted—away from the people they are elected to fight for and toward leftwing pressure groups. But the merits of the issue have not changed, so the Senate will consider this issue further and will vote on this legislation again.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to speak tonight because I did not support the Coast Guard bill as it came out of committee. We wanted to see changes to it, and the legislation that was brought up and the final language on Monday night gave our colleagues very little time to consider it.

Washington State is very proud of the rich maritime heritage the Coast Guard provides, and our fishermen, Tribes, shipbuilders, sea trade, and

thriving coastal tourism all count on us to work together for our maritime economy.

Thousands of Pacific Northwest fishermen call Washington State home, with over 35,000 Washington State jobs supported by Alaska fisheries. The ports of Tacoma and Seattle are combined to be the fourth largest container gateway in the United States.

The Coast Guard plays a pivotal role in national security, in fishing, in over-seeing and, in many ways, keeping our waterways safe. That is why we would love to see a Coast Guard bill which moves forward without the controversial pieces of language that are included.

I know many of my colleagues have thought this is a way to get our colleagues from the Midwest, and other places, to just swallow wholesale huge changes that could cost our economy billions of dollars—such as the zebra mussel, which alone would cost \$6.4 billion a year, and an ecosystem full of rampant and sometimes toxic algae growth, which would and destroy recreation. This is from a letter regarding the Coast Guard Authorization Act.

I would like to see us move forward tonight on the things we can agree on—Why? Because I know these things are important as well—and continue to work on a resolution for some of the thornier issues that still remain.

I would like to see us move forward. I would like to see a recapitalization of the Coast Guard icebreaker and Polar Star. The Polar Star is homeported in Seattle and is operational only for our heavy icebreaker capabilities.

This bill also includes language to improve the Coast Guard oversight of ships that pose an oilspill risk, which is a constant threat to us in Puget Sound and throughout the West, given the large amount of oil traffic that comes through Puget Sound out our strait.

The bill also includes language to strengthen paid family leave policies at the Coast Guard. We just had the commandant nominee before the Commerce Committee. One of the reasons I questioned him on the paid family leave strategies and moving forward is that I want to give him every tool to continue to keep the workforce of women that they have in the Coast Guard. His commitment to me is that they would love to see this strengthened paid family leave policy in the underlying Coast Guard bill. Why not give that to them tonight? Our Coast Guard families should not be forced to choose between serving their country and supporting their families, and this bill would be a good step forward.

Lastly, this bill includes bipartisan language that would help us protect shipyard jobs by making sure we fix the problem related to Dakota Creek and also making sure our permanent fishing vessel exemptions would be allowed in this legislation.

I know we face challenges on continued definitions of best technology. But

that is better than having a definition that exists in the underlying bill, which I think we should separate the good policy from, that would really make no indication or an economic analysis that would leave us with the Great Lakes, and many areas, without the kind of clean water that will allow us to continue to do good science and good fishery policy in that area of the United States.

I hope we can move forward on the policies that my colleagues know we can get agreement on. I just heard the debate between the majority leader and Senator SCHUMER, so I understand there is an objection to moving the Coast Guard bill.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

I have a bill at the desk to improve the regulation of certain vessels, and I ask unanimous consent, as in legislative session, that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, let me just make one correction for the record that my friend, the Democratic leader, brought up earlier and which has been alluded to by the Senator from Washington.

The issue was a matter under the jurisdiction of the Commerce Committee, and for the information of the Senate, this part of the bill has been introduced as a stand-alone bill. Senate bill 168 was referred to the Commerce Committee and not the EPW Committee, and the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee agrees with that. So this argument that somehow this is not under the committee's jurisdiction is one I would raise as an objection to the request of Senator from Washington.

Secondly, as I think the Senator from Washington knows, we have worked tirelessly with every member of our committee on both sides of the aisle and Members off the committee. Furthermore, I think we have accommodated every request the Senator from Washington has made on this bill, and we have involved her in all these discussions. My understanding was that as a result of that consultation and those discussions on the bill, she was going to vote in favor of the bill.

Now what she wants to do is take out those pieces of a very carefully negotiated bill that she doesn't like and pass just the provisions that she likes. It would be great if, here in the U.S. Senate, we could all do that. But that doesn't happen around here.

We carefully negotiated this, with great input from the Senator from Washington, and it was my understanding that the Senator from Washington was going to vote for this package. I object to picking out the pieces

that we like and not working with the collaborative process that has involved both Republicans and Democrats, both on the committee and off the committee, to bring a bill to the floor that enjoyed 65 votes in support until this afternoon. Politics is being played here—pure and simple, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

I object to the Senator's request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, who I know considers the efforts of the Commerce Committee as great, hard work, and I appreciate his hard work. As I mentioned, I did not support the bill as it came out of committee.

I know there are things we are trying to work on to keep this process moving. But I would say to my colleague, the small vessel discharge bill has been something that has been part of an exemption process related to this for a long time. It has been considered many times over. Our fishermen need the certainty of this.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

I have a bill at the desk related to the application of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and ask unanimous consent that, as in legislative session, the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I would simply say this is peeling out pieces of the bill that one Senator in this Chamber likes and basically telling every other Senator on both sides of the aisle, Republicans and Democrats who negotiated this, to go pound sand: We don't like the provisions that have been negotiated on both sides, very carefully, over months.

I might add, this bill has been introduced and dealt with at the committee level during five different Congresses—five different Congresses. This year, it has passed not once, but twice, out of the Senate Commerce Committee by a voice vote.

It seems to me, at least, that even after it came out of the committee, the fact that we negotiated this with the Senator from Washington and multiple Senators on the other side of the aisle, both on and off the committee, to come up with a balanced package that enjoyed broad bipartisan support—65 votes—until this afternoon, suggests to me this is purely politics being played with this legislation.

This is an important bill. This is the Coast Guard. This is VIDA. VIDA was referred to the Commerce Committee by the Parliamentarian. We have worked with the Commerce Committee; we have worked with the EPW

Committee; we have worked with the EPA. The EPA is supporting the solution. This is not the political-level EPA; these are the career folks at the EPA who support the solution we have come up with. Yet we run into these objections that are all of a sudden—all of a sudden—coming up out of thin air.

So, Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I see my colleague from the Midwest is on the floor, and I am sure he has something to say about this. But I would just say to the chairman of the Commerce Committee: You are right. Years and years of discussion about ballast water has been a challenge.

The question tonight is whether we are going to hold up other legislation just to get that language or to push through a proposal that really doesn't give security for our waters not to be polluted or to be greatly impacted or to threaten the sea life and the opportunities for a vibrant waterway in many parts of the country.

All I am trying to do, as I have always tried to do, is be constructive in the process—both in the Commerce Committee with this issue and for the very issues that affect the Coast Guard and the Pacific Northwest.

I know this will not be the last time we hear about the fishing vessel issue. I am sure we will hear about it many times because it has been on the calendar. So we will continue this discussion, but I thank him for at least coming here tonight to discuss these issues. There are other issues that are being held up as hostage in this legislation, and they shouldn't be held hostage.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank both Senator THUNE and Senator CANTWELL for their exchange back and forth. I especially appreciate Senator CANTWELL's work. I grew up an hour and a half away from Lake Erie and saw, in the 1960s, what that lake looked like. For 10 years, I lived in a home near Lake Erie, and I saw the improvements we made. This bill, unfortunately, with that amendment sets us back.

We need to keep invasive species out of Lake Erie, and we need to pass a Coast Guard bill. There is no reason we can't do both. I want to speak to that in a moment.

First, I want to speak on how vital Lake Erie is to my State. Fifty percent of the fish in all the Great Lakes consider Lake Erie their habitat. The water is critical to farming, clean energy development, industry, and regional economic competitiveness. From tourism in Catawba and Put-in-Bay, to fishing in Marblehead, to vacations and family reunions at Maumee Bay State Park, Lake Erie benefits our communities and creates jobs in Ohio.

For more than half a century—I am going back to when I was a kid in the 1960s and saw what Lake Erie looked like—keeping our lake healthy has been a constant struggle. Where I lived on Lake Erie, the lake was about 50 to 60 feet deep. Moving west toward Toledo, the lake is about 30 feet deep. Contrast that with Lake Superior, which is 600 feet deep, and you can see the challenge of keeping Lake Erie clean, and you can see the vulnerability of that lake. That is the reason for the algal blooms. That is the reason that Lake Erie has had the most difficult issues facing its aquatic life. Runoff that causes harmful algal blooms and invasive species are threats we battle every year.

That is why Senator PORTMAN and I came to this floor and fought back against the President's budget 2 years in a row when the President was going to cut close to \$300 million from the Great Lakes Initiative. Two years in a row, Senator PORTMAN and I fought back against it because we know that cleaning up Lake Erie is something we did in the sixties, but keeping Lake Erie clean is something we do in the seventies, eighties, nineties, into this century, and into this millennium.

The Great Lakes are home to more than 185 non-native species. By some estimates, invasive species cause \$5 billion in damages to the Great Lakes every single year. A provision that would make our fight against invasive species harder has been added to the bill to reauthorize our Coast Guard. That is why I voted no earlier today.

As much as I want Coast Guard reauthorization, my first responsibility, other than looking out for working families in Ohio every day, is to keep the greatest natural resource in the country clean—my part of the Great Lakes, Lake Erie, the part that borders Ohio.

This provision would make it easier for invasive species to enter our lakes, harm our drinking water, and threaten local jobs that depend on boating and fishing. Every year, I meet with the Lake Erie sea captains, boat captains. They talk about the beauty of the lake and the importance of the lake to their businesses and to all of us in Northern Ohio. This provision doesn't belong in the Coast Guard bill. The Senate did the right thing by blocking it.

Again I say I strongly support the Coast Guard reauthorization. I want to see it passed. I agree with Senator THUNE. I want it to be law. That is why it is critical that this provision be removed from the bill so Congress can move forward with supporting our Coast Guard without threatening the Great Lakes. Members of the Coast Guard surely think the same thing.

This provision would eliminate the ability of Great Lakes States, such as Ohio, to set separate water quality standards to keep out invasive species. Tankers and cargo ships carry something called ballast water with them to help with stability and smooth sailing.

When they load on more cargo, they let out some of the water, and it flows out into whatever body of water they happen to be in at that time.

Think about these ships. In some sense, they are luxury liners for invasive species. They might be picked up off the coast of Japan. They might be picked up in the Indian Ocean. They might be picked up in the South Atlantic Ocean. They end up coming down the Saint Lawrence Seaway carrying this water with invasive species from around the world, and they release them into Lake Erie or into Lake Ontario or Lake Michigan or Lake Superior or Lake Huron.

It may not sound like a big deal if a ship takes on water with zebra mussels in the Caspian Sea off the coast of Russia and lets them out in Lake Erie, but those little mussels do major damage to our lakes and our economy. Local governments and taxpayers end up paying the price. This affects the beauty of Lake Erie and the cleanliness of its water. That is so important. It affects the economy because it costs local taxpayers money to clean up from these invasive species. They clog up water intake pipes. They spike costs for local ratepayers. They make toxic algal blooms worse. When drinking water gets contaminated, the local water utility has to clean it up, and they pass on the cost. The fishing and tourism industries rely on Lake Erie and feel that pain.

As I said, I remember how polluted Lake Erie looked when I was growing up. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has made a real difference. We have made real progress cleaning up the lake's tributaries, from the Black River, to the Cuyahoga River, to the Ashtabula River, to the Grand River, to the Maumee River, the largest tributary feeding into any of the Great Lakes, draining 4 million acres west and south of Toledo. It has been a bipartisan success story.

The Great Lakes region contains 84 percent of North America's surface freshwater and provides drinking water to tens of millions of Americans. It generates billions in economic activity. Why would we risk that? Why would we risk that by voting for this bill? That is why Senator CANTWELL was right. We need to pass a Coast Guard bill. We need to keep invasive species out of Lake Erie. We can do both by stripping this provision from the bill right away and move it forward and pass it.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, when we think about climate change—

something we don't do much of in this body—we often think about rising global temperatures and heat waves, and we think of changing weather patterns, stronger storms, or sea level rise threatening coastal communities. We actually see these effects unfold across the United States and around the world as heat records fall, winters shrink, and waters creep ever higher along our coastlines.

We also see the economic consequences of climate change. Just last year, the United States suffered a record 16 separate billion-dollar weather disasters, adding up to well over \$300 billion in damages. Acidifying seawater has devastated shellfish harvests in the Pacific Northwest. Rhode Island fishermen struggle as their traditional catches move farther north and offshore. Insurers and bond rating agencies warn that coastal regions are becoming too risky to build homes and infrastructure.

Among those various hazards, there is another hazard: the effects of climate change on public health. The Rhode Island Department of Health has produced this guide for Rhode Islanders to help them understand the health risks they face from climate change and to better learn how to protect themselves from what are often new risks.

Perhaps the most obvious effect of climate change on public health is increased heat-related illness and mortality. This link has been well studied across the country, often cross-referencing temperature records and death certificates. Work has been done by a lot of places; one of them is Rhode Island's own Brown University.

Here is the Rhode Island Health Department report. Over the last century, Rhode Island's average temperature has already increased by more than 3 degrees Fahrenheit, and temperatures are expected to keep on climbing due to climate change. Currently, Rhode Island sees on average only about 10 days of 90-plus degree temperatures. Starting in the next decade and running through the end of the century, the number of days that the heat index will hit at least 90 degrees will rise to between 13 and 44 days each summer. That is as much as 6 weeks in a summer of heat in the nineties. That increase of hot summer days caused by climate change puts many Rhode Islanders at risk, particularly those who don't have air conditioning, either because they can't afford it or because, right now, they don't need it. Heat waves are the leading cause of extreme weather-related deaths in the United States, causing an average of more than 600 deaths a year and thousands more hospitalizations. Rhode Island, even though we are in the Northeast, is not spared, and with climate change, it will only get worse.

Hot days pose a health risk to many different groups of people, as shown here in Rhode Island's Department of Health report. Children, the elderly,

people who work outdoors, athletes, the disabled, pregnant women, and folks who are on medications that reduce their bodies' ability to dissipate heat are just some of the many people who are especially at risk from heat waves. Because of the nature of their responsibilities, emergency responders are particularly vulnerable.

When I visited Phoenix, AZ, I was told by their emergency response leadership that they are having to restructure the duty schedules to protect firefighters from being overcome, if they are out fighting fires or responding to an emergency in daytime temperatures, because they overheat. So you have to rotate them through much faster and add cooling and hydration teams to support the fire crews as they speed through their heightened rotations.

An ER doc from the Lifespan health system in Rhode Island visited my office and told another story about an older woman who was treated for a heat-related illness. She had just been sitting outside on a hot day, in the Sun, enjoying herself. Perhaps she didn't feel the need to hydrate herself. Perhaps some routine medication that she was on made her more susceptible, but she was not aware of how quickly she was overheating. When her husband returned home from work, he found her lethargic and unable to move, with a body temperature of 107 degrees.

Hotter temperatures are bad on their own because of the effects they have on people's bodies and because of the added deaths that they cause, but they also work to create more ozone. Ozone is dangerous. Ozone is dangerous for children. It is dangerous for the elderly. It is dangerous for anyone with asthma or other breathing-related difficulties. Again, from Rhode Island's health report, Rhode Island's asthma rates are 33 percent higher than national averages for adults and 40 percent higher for children. So asthma is pretty serious for us, and people go to the hospital for this.

This is not just an inconvenience. In Rhode Island, we have heard air quality alerts on morning drive-time radio. You are going in to work and listening to the radio, and the announcer is saying, "Kids, seniors, people with breathing difficulties, you need to stay indoors today." It is a sunny, perfect summer day, it seems. Ozone is not visible, but because it is there and because of what it does to lungs and to asthma, people in Rhode Island are told they can't go outdoors that day. That kind of bad day alert, because it is for ozone, is going to become more frequent as climate change warms up our climate and produces more ozone.

It works this way. Our air in Rhode Island is polluted, primarily, by midwestern powerplants. Out in the Midwest, they run the emissions up supertall smokestacks. The pollution is then injected up into the atmosphere and is carried away on prevailing winds. Guess what. It bakes in the Sun,

turns to ozone, and it lands on us—not them, us. It is their pollution, our lungs.

Thanks a bunch, guys.

Our air is also worsened by smoke from forest fires, even from as far away as Canada, and the warming climate, as the Presiding Officer knows, has created an extraordinary fire situation out West. Changing precipitation patterns have produced more fires, and that means more smoke in downwind States, and we are a downwind State.

The result of all of this is that Rhode Island's air quality receives only a C from the American Lung Association. This poor grade is largely because of ozone, most of which comes from out of State. We end up with grade C air because of, primarily, out-of-State pollutants. This is not just some minor inconvenience. Across the country, air pollution—much of it made worse by climate change—is responsible for a staggering 200,000 premature deaths each year.

Pollen is another problem. Shifting seasons produce a longer pollen season. Increased pollen levels, particularly with increased air pollution, kick in allergies, which takes us into another risk. The warmth of earlier springs and later falls also means that tick and mosquito season in Rhode Island lasts far longer than it used to, and that moves us to yet more health risks and diseases.

Rhode Island already has the fourth highest rate of Lyme disease in the country. We have over 900 cases a year, and as temperatures increase, we are likely to see the number of ticks in Rhode Island increase, which would be expected to lead to even more cases of Lyme disease. In States not too far north of us, the tick situation has gotten so out of control that they are actually seeing moose calves die off because they are so swarmed with ticks. I am sorry. I know this is a little bit gross, but calves are dying when their bodies can't support both their own metabolism and feeding the ticks that have crawled up onto them in the thousands—in some cases, over 10,000 ticks. So we have to be concerned about this not just for ourselves but for the wildlife around us.

Warmer temperatures also provide a longer breeding season for mosquitoes. More downpours—yet another result of climate change—result in more standing water, which is habitat for mosquito larvae. Rhode Island has been up 76 percent in extreme downpours since 1950. That is the largest increase in extreme precipitation events out of all 50 States. Of course, these little critters, the mosquitoes, carry the West Nile virus, the Eastern equine encephalitis, and other illnesses we didn't used to see in our State.

As if all of this were not bad enough, climate change is also worsening another natural hazard that threatens public health—harmful algae blooms. Algae naturally occur in lakes and oceans, but in certain conditions, algae

populations can explode. These blooms, they call them—blooms of algae—can slime waterways and overwhelm ecosystems, eating up nutrients, and they can deplete oxygen in the water and in the oceans so completely that no other life can exist, so that other creatures—fish—actually suffocate in the water. Algae are often, therefore, the reason behind massive fish kills.

Some kinds of algae even produce toxins. People can become sick from exposure to the contaminated, toxin-filled water and even from the air if you get enough surface turbulence and churning of waves that it aerates the toxins, and then it is inhaled. The toxins can get into our food chain. They end up in shellfish and seafood on our dinner plates. Depending on which toxin it is, the consequences for people, for pets, and for wildlife can range from rashes and skin irritation, to pretty severe neurological and gastrointestinal symptoms, to respiratory arrest, and even death.

In 2016, New England was hit for the first time by a Pseudo-nitzschia bloom—a kind of algae that produces a toxin, domoic acid, which caused large swaths of Narragansett Bay to be closed to shellfishing. The Providence Journal reported: “In the more than 15 years officials have tested for [domoic acid], Rhode Island . . . never had a bloom reaching dangerous levels.” In March of 2017, Rhode Island was forced, once again, to institute emergency shellfish closures in Narragansett Bay—stuff that did not used to happen before this—when algae produced dangerous levels of domoic acid.

This may seem funny to my western colleagues, but people make their living doing this stuff, so it is not funny to us in Rhode Island when climate change is warming our oceans and creating these risks. Harmful algae blooms have also been advised for ponds in Portsmouth, Cranston, Greenville, and Tiverton.

In all of these ways—from heat-related illnesses, to respiratory disease, to allergies, to tick- and mosquito-borne illnesses, to toxic algae blooms—climate change has serious and wide-ranging effects on public health. Rhode Island's Department of Health has done an excellent service with this report—in helping Rhode Islanders learn how to be aware and to protect themselves. It was supported, by the way, by a grant from the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in its Climate and Health Program. It was a small \$10 million program, but it helped this project's report come to fruition in Rhode Island. We appreciate it. It is a wise investment to help prepare Americans for unfamiliar diseases that are being driven into our neighborhoods by a change in climate.

As I conclude, I know that there are colleagues here who do not care to listen to environmental groups, but they might want to listen to the American Medical Association. The American Medical Association writes: “Scientific

surveys have shown clear evidence that our patients are facing adverse health effects associated with climate change.”

Colleagues might listen to the American Lung Association, which writes: “Climate change seriously threatens our wellness—especially our lung health.”

Perhaps colleagues might consider the opinion of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which writes: “Tackling climate change could be the greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century.” They write that because here is the problem: “Climate change poses threats to human health, safety, and security, and children are at particularly high risk.”

We may disagree about a lot around here, but when the American Academy of Pediatrics is telling us that climate change poses serious threats to human health, safety, and security and that children are at particularly high risk, it is a very callous thing to pay no attention. It is time to wake up. Our constituents' health and well-being actually does hang in the balance, and this Rhode Island report shows it for our State at least.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Rhode Island for his leadership and his outspokenness—how he has shown the importance of the Senate actually doing its job on both climate change and campaign finance and how much they are related to each other because of the stranglehold the oil industry has on the Republican Party and the hundreds of millions of dollars they spend. Senator WHITEHOUSE has been on this floor well over 100 times to talk about that. The country certainly listens, and the country is, certainly, in the same place he is and a lot of us are. Unfortunately, the special interest groups in this town continue to control this Senate.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. President, right now, American manufacturers and American workers are not competing on a level playing field with foreign competitors. The Export-Import Bank is a vital tool for manufacturers in Ohio. In other States, it is helping them export Ohio products around the world. It is helping them compete in the global marketplace. Yet, for an unbelievable 3 years, the Export-Import Bank has been forced to stop most of its work.

I am joined on the floor today by Senator HEITKAMP of North Dakota, who will make the case, as I do, that it makes no sense that some special interest groups have stopped and some ideology way out in right field has stopped the Senate from doing its job with the Export-Import Bank.

Over these 3 years, 95 export credit agencies around the globe, including China's massive export credit agencies, have been aggressively helping foreign

competitors win sales and the jobs that come with them—jobs that would be in the United States but that don't exist in this country—if the administration and the Republican Congress would do their job and move forward on the Export-Import Bank.

China provides more credit every 2 years than the Export-Import Bank has in its 80-year history. If Congress is serious about ensuring American businesses stay competitive, we have to have a functional export-import credit agency, but this Congress has done the opposite. It starved the Bank of the nominees it needs to function, it has crippled its ability to support American jobs for no reason that anybody can figure out. Right now, the Export-Import Bank under law can't finance any transaction worth more than \$10 million because under the law, if it doesn't have a quorum, it can't do that.

The Bank's opponents in the Senate have spent years blocking votes on Board nominees because they want to kill the Bank. It is a small minority of Members of this Senate and the House, but they have had their way with their parliamentary tricks. Every additional day of delay means lost contracts in Ohio, North Dakota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Oklahoma, and lost contracts mean lost jobs and additional costs to taxpayers. Without new transactions, the Bank will not be able to self-finance its operations.

If the Bank is fully reopened, it expects to return more than \$600 million to the Treasury, meaning more jobs, more businesses, more tax revenues, but we are not doing it.

Tomorrow the Ex-Im Bank will begin its annual conference. Senior officials from the administration, including Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and White House National Trade Council Director Peter Navarro will be in attendance. Why are they there? They played no role in keeping the Export-Import Bank functioning. This meeting is usually an opportunity for American exporters to learn about how Ex-Im can help them grow their business.

I have dozens of those companies. There are some big ones like GE, large businesses such as Boeing. Both do a lot of business in my State, provide a lot of jobs, but it is the smaller companies that most people in this Chamber—I have heard of them because I work with them—but most people in this Chamber haven't heard of these small companies that benefit.

Instead, the Bank tomorrow will have to warn American companies that it is prohibited from doing its work. The Bank is hobbled. There will not be a single member of the Board of Directors to represent the Bank at its own conference. Why? Because we haven't confirmed any of them.

To businesses in Ohio, this makes no sense. They don't understand why President Trump will not do anything about it. He has refused. They don't understand why Senator MCCONNELL will not do anything about this. He has refused.

Dozens of American goods are not being manufactured and sold because the Bank is crippled. American companies sit on the sidelines.

Ohio is the home to GE Aviation, which designs and builds the most advanced commercial aircraft engines in the world. Senator PORTMAN and I have both seen the work they do. Senator PORTMAN, my Republican colleague in Ohio, is very supportive of the Bank. He and I have seen up close this plant and their incredible technology. They build the best aircraft engines in the world. GE Aviation supports 24,000 workers in Alabama, Kentucky, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Mississippi. That doesn't include the thousands of workers who are their supplier partners. They all risk losing business because their foreign competitors have a tool they don't.

GE can offer the best workforce, the best technology, but without the Export-Import Bank, they can't match the financing the foreign airline gets from the United Kingdom when they buy Rolls Royce engines. GE is far from alone. Many manufacturers, as I said, are being hurt.

When Ex-Im was fully operational, it provided \$20 billion in financing to American companies and supported nearly 165,000 jobs. These are generally good-paying union manufacturing jobs. Maybe that is part of the problem. They are union jobs, and I know the opponents of Export-Import Bank aren't wild about union jobs.

This past fiscal year that financing was cut by more than two-thirds. The Bank supports 40,000 jobs. It went from 165,000 before to 40,000 now. That is why the demand for reopening the Bank is overwhelming—the National Association of Manufacturers, the chamber of commerce, the Aerospace Industries Association—one after another after another—the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and small business across the country.

President Trump last year said he wanted the Bank to get back to work, but he nominated somebody who was determined to kill the Bank. We voted down that nomination with a bipartisan vote, and we supported four others who wanted and believed in the Export-Import Bank and wanted to make it work.

Let's deliver for American businesses and American workers. Let's reopen the Bank. Let's make sure the Bank supports another 125,000 jobs. We can't wait any longer. The Senate has waited 4 months. Senator MCCONNELL doesn't seem to want to move on this. President Trump doesn't want to do anything about this. There are \$44 billion in transactions at the Bank that need Board approval. All of these opportunities for job creation and all these opportunities for growing American businesses could be lost.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Ex-

ecutive Calendar Nos. 579 and 580, Spencer Bachus; No. 581, Judith Pryor; No. 582, Kimberly Reed; No. 583 and 584, Claudia Slacik; and No. 585, Mark Greenblatt; that the Senate proceed to vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that no further motions be in order to the nominations; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD, and the President be notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I have long advocated for profound reform of the Export-Import Bank. My preference has long been that the U.S. administration—in fact, this was an obligation of the previous administration which it chose to ignore—but that the U.S. administration negotiate among our trading partners a mutual phaseout of these taxpayer-subsidized export entities.

My objection to this is the embedded taxpayer subsidy, the embedded taxpayer risk in every transaction the Ex-Im does. The special interest I am defending here today is the American taxpayer.

Now, I am pretty sure I am not going to change anyone's mind on the floor tonight, so let me just make clear about where we are with these nominees. During the Banking Committee hearings, I and other colleagues made it clear. I would support the nominees to fill the vacancies on the Board provided that a reformer such as Scott Garrett was included among them. I would have supported restoring the quorum with the confidence that there would have been at least a good-faith effort to begin the kind of reforms we need. Unfortunately, the committee chose not to advance Scott Garrett, who would have done, I think, a very good job bridging the gap between the opponents and proponents of Ex-Im Bank, but that was not to be.

Instead, Ex-Im supporters are now asking to confirm the remaining nominees but not include Scott Garrett, who has taken himself out of the running at this point, nor would it include any other person as President.

What would the consequences of this be if this unanimous consent request were agreed to? The Ex-Im Bank would constitute a quorum, would resume doing multimillion- and multibillion-dollar deals, all which would put taxpayers at risk and there would be no prospect of any meaningful reform.

I remain open to finding a new candidate who can lead Ex-Im and implement the kind of reforms that are needed, but that is not what is on the table at the moment, and until that time comes, I cannot support the confirmation of these additional Board members, which would reconstitute the quorum; therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I am disappointed that we can't confirm the Ex-Im nominees today. I know many other Senators want to resolve this situation.

I will continue to push to reopen the Ex-Im Bank.

We were willing—the majority of the Banking Committee was willing to flip and put Mr. Garrett as one of the members, one of the four members, and make Mr. Bachus, another former House Member, who is qualified and is a supporter of the Ex-Im Bank Chairman. We were willing to have Scott Garrett on this Board but not as Chairman because the Chairman sets the agenda. Mr. Garrett would not, when questioned by Senator HEITKAMP, who asked him tough questions, would not commit to the committee that he wasn't out to destroy and undermine the Bank. We were willing to put Mr. Garrett there, just not in the Chairman's position. It is clear Mr. Garrett, on behalf of the Vice President and a small number of Members of this body, want to undermine and destroy the Ex-Im Bank. There is no question about that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I would like to point out that included in the list of nominees who my colleague from Ohio asked unanimous consent for confirmation, was the inspector general for the Export-Import Bank. That is a different function. That is a function I supported in committee, and I would support today. As far as I am aware, there is no objection whatsoever on this side of the aisle and no objection to confirming the inspector general to this post. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Executive Calendar No. 585; that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object.

Mr. President, how does it make sense to confirm an inspector general for an agency that really isn't an agency that is actually in operation doing its best? So we are not going to appoint the members of the Board. We will have zero Board members. They will not be able to conduct the quality and the quantity of business that they used to, and that they could if we had no objection to the motion earlier, and then we are going to have an inspector gen-

eral to watch over them? That simply doesn't make sense.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I am here representing a special interest group called the workers of America.

Mr. INHOFE. Will the Senator yield for a unanimous consent request?

Ms. HEITKAMP. Yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of remarks by our leader, Mr. MCCONNELL, I be recognized for 45 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I would like to insert an opportunity to speak for 5 minutes after Senator MCCONNELL and then yield to the Senator from Oklahoma for 45 minutes.

Mr. INHOFE. I have no objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the request, as modified, is agreed to.

The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Thank you, Mr. President.

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

I just want to say I am representing a special interest group, too, the workers of this country—the workers who have lost jobs because we do not have a functioning Ex-Im Bank; the workers whose opportunity to earn a living has been compromised because we don't have an Ex-Im Bank that is functioning; the workers who are now handed a big 50-pound weight against a Chinese worker, when the Chinese are pumping money into their export agencies and competing unfairly because we don't have an Ex-Im Bank.

Can we just for a minute be for the workers?

The Ex-Im Bank does not cost the taxpayer and has not cost the taxpayer a dime. In fact, it returns money to the Treasury. It is a win-win, but yet here we are, based on strictly ideological grounds, arguing the value of the Ex-Im Bank.

My colleague from Pennsylvania said he wants reform. I will state that we passed an effort I led in order to reauthorize the Ex-Im Bank. That was a big fight. That was not a little deal; that was a big fight. In fact, we had to hold up votes on TPA so we could get a commitment on reauthorizing the Ex-Im Bank because you can't authorize trade agreements and then take away an integral part and necessary part of the trade structure, which is the Ex-Im Bank.

So let me state, all of these reforms that we agreed to were critical, such as the appointment of a chief ethics officer, appointment of a chief risk officer, forming the risk management committee—pretty important to carry out responsibility.

Guess why these reforms aren't being done. Because we don't have a functioning Ex-Im Bank. We do not have what we need to get these actions approved. So when we go through this whole process and we begin to talk about this and we say this is about reform—no, it is not. Is this about saving the taxpayers money? No, it is not. This is about an ideology. This is about third-party interest groups making this their chief whipping boy, inappropriately, and stopping American jobs.

We are in some pretty tough times right now with China, potentially in a trade war, with the potential to really, I think, hurt our country moving forward for decades to come—think about that—at a time when we are trying to drive this economy into the 21st century to provide an opportunity for us to actually win in trade.

Now, I like to tell young people who come into my office: If you don't remember anything else that I have talked about, remember the number five—five. Now, 95 percent of the people on this Earth do not live in this country. If we are not trading with them, if we are not aggressively using every tool in the toolbox to reach out and trade with them, we are going to lose. We are not going to lose just in the next 2, 3, or 4 years, but we are going to lose a whole generation of opportunity and get left behind.

So it is time for us to step up and get a fully functioning Ex-Im Bank. How do we do that? Well, we approve the four nominees whom Ranking Member BROWN has advanced and who have been stopped. The four nominees are incredibly well qualified. They had a great hearing. The Presiding Officer sits on that committee with me and knows how incredibly qualified they are. Yet, because of a minority opinion, we are held off again.

We don't have a Bank that is working, and the people who work for that Bank, who have developed relationships, developed expertise, they have waited too long. We are losing every day. We are losing this piece of trade infrastructure that is absolutely critical to the competition for American businesses.

Let's talk about what we are up against. The lack of the Ex-Im Bank board quorum has left \$44 billion of exports on the table. They can't get approved because we don't have a quorum. OK, so it is a big number. Do you know what is a bigger number? When you take that and you translate it into American jobs, there are a quarter of a million American jobs that are going to be lost, that are going to be diverted to other countries because we are in this petty squabble right here with a minority group of people.

I want to add some other pieces. Every day that passes without a quorum, Congress is risking these deals, so let me tell you about some of these deals. Mack Trucks can't export Pennsylvania-manufactured vehicles to Cameroon. A U.S. engineering company

can't build a highway in Mozambique. A major petrochemical company in Egypt is on hold, and an energy project in Mozambique cannot be finalized. Hoffman International, a small business in New Jersey, can't finalize a deal with the Government of Cameroon.

If we are not trading, we are losing in this country. And if we don't have an Ex-Im Bank, we don't have a fully functioning trade apparatus. That is truth. So it is time to put aside this petty squabble.

I want to remark briefly that when we started the reauthorization effort, I was told: There is no way; you can't get the majority opinion.

The Ex-Im Bank got almost 70 votes here—almost 70 votes for reauthorization. When it went over to the House, where we were told once again that we could never get the political support for reauthorization, that it is too toxic, too high profile, guess what—well, 70 percent of the House of Representatives voted for the Ex-Im Bank.

We are being held captive. There are 250,000 American workers being held captive by an ideology that is going to fail us and doom our export effort to failure for not just the next couple of years but for a generation to come. The whole while, do you know what China is doing? When China's growth took a little dip, they pumped even more billions of dollars into their ex-im bank, into their ex-im credit agency. Do you think they did that because they thought it was a worthless gesture? No. They did it because they knew they could compete against us.

Let's not fail these 250,000 workers. Let's not fail to be smart in our competition with China. Let's get this done. The only way to get it done is to get a quorum on the Ex-Im Bank, and the only way to get a quorum is to break the deadlock that is here, stop leading with ideology, start leading with common sense, and start leading with the opportunity to respond to one of the most significant special interests groups in this country; that is, the American workers.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

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.

SENATE NATO OBSERVER GROUP

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Democratic leader and I are

proud to reestablish the Senate NATO Observer Group. The group was originally established in 1997 to provide a focal point for addressing NATO issues that cut across committee jurisdictions and to help educate Senators on the issues involved in any decision to enlarge NATO and to permit close interaction between the executive branch and the Senate during negotiations on NATO enlargement. Following the Senate's ratification of the protocols of accession in April 1998, the group ceased to function until it was reestablished on June 17, 2002. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota and Minority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi announced the formation of a new Senate NATO Observer Group to follow NATO's decision to formally invite additional new countries to join the Alliance at the Prague Summit. In his floor announcement, Senator Daschle said the bipartisan Senate NATO Observer Group would "advise the full Senate" on NATO and the next round of NATO enlargement. The Senate NATO Observer Group remained active through 2007, but was ultimately disbanded due to a lack of NATO enlargement rounds.

In arguing for reestablishment of the group, Senators TILLIS and SHAHEEN wrote to Senator SCHUMER and I that: "Exactly 10 years ago Estonia was one of the first countries to come under attack from Russia's modern form of hybrid warfare. In 2007, Russia conducted massive cyber-attacks on Estonia in response to Estonia's decision to relocate a Soviet Red Army memorial in Tallinn. One year later, as talks of eventual NATO membership for Georgia were debated, Russia activated its famed little green men in Georgia, invaded, and eventually occupied the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. These regions are under Russian occupation to this day."

In 2014, Ukraine befell a similar fate as Russia instigated a conflict, resulting in the occupation of Crimea and continued bloodshed in Ukraine's Donbass or eastern region. Since April 2014, when war erupted in eastern Ukraine, more than 10,000 people have died, a number which is steadily rising. Despite successive attempts at international negotiations and peace, the Kremlin grew more aggressive in its stance and, in 2016, expanded its malign efforts into Western Europe and the United States.

During the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections, U.S. intelligence agencies were able to conclude that Russia interfered in the U.S. elections using a combination of hybrid tools. A similar pattern soon emerged across NATO states, where the Kremlin used both cyber attacks and disinformation to sow chaos and mistrust in Western democracies. Given these newfound challenges, increased engagement and assistance for transatlantic security was elevated as a critical priority for the Senate, as well as successive administrations.

The 2018 Senate NATO Observer Group will mirror the structure and make-up of previous Senate NATO Observer Groups with eight Members serving ex officio, the two leaders plus the chairman and ranking member of the Appropriations, Armed Services, and Foreign Relations Committees. In addition, the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee would also be invited to serve as ex-officio members. Senators SHAHEEN and TILLIS, both Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, would be named the cochairs, and a small group of Senators active on NATO issues would be named to the group jointly by the leaders and cochairs.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today I am pleased to join my colleague the Republican leader in reestablishing the Senate NATO Observer Group. In the late 1940s, under the stewardship of President Harry Truman, the United States led our Western allies in the creation of an unprecedented arrangement to provide for our collective defense. Since then, NATO has guaranteed the security of our European allies and has come to our aid, protecting the United States in its darkest hours following the 9/11 attacks. Today, new threats are emerging from Russia and along NATO's southern border, making the alliance more necessary than ever. It is the responsibility of the Senate to be kept abreast of any and all factors affecting such a key component of our national defense.

The Senate NATO Observer group was first established in 1997 and oversaw the enlargement of our alliance to countries recently freed from Soviet domination in Eastern Europe. Following the reestablishment of the group in 2002 by Majority Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota and Minority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi, the Senate NATO Observer group had an oversight role during the NATO mission in Afghanistan—again, the only time a NATO member has invoked the right to collective self-defense.

Unfortunately, since talks of further enlargement of the alliance expired 10 years ago, the Senate Observer Group lapsed. Since that time, Russia has reasserted itself in Eastern Europe through the aggressive use of hybrid warfare, including cyber infiltration of our allies' political infrastructure, as well as our own. While Georgia considered eventual NATO membership, Russia invaded and occupied South Ossetia and Abkhazia, regions which remain in Russian hands today. A similar fate befell Ukraine in 2014, when Russia's "little green men" were inserted into a civil conflict that spilled over into a civil war in which thousands of people died.

As we learned during the 2016 Presidential election, the Kremlin's aggressive posture extends far beyond Russia's borders. American intelligence agencies have shown conclusively that Russia has interfered in elections at