

The motion was agreed to.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 624.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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 Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, John Cornyn, John Kennedy, Richard Burr, Mike Lee, David Perdue, Steve Daines, James Lankford, Pat Roberts, Johnny Isakson, Jeff Flake, Lindsey Graham, Patrick J. Toomey, Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton, James E. Risch.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### WELCOMING MAILE PEARL BOWLSBEY TO THE SENATE FLOOR

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, it was very exciting to have Maile Pearl with us on the floor just moments ago. It was certainly the first time I have seen a little baby on the floor of the Senate and may be a good symbol for the work the Senate will be doing in the future for the children of the United States of America.

Congratulations to Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH and her husband, Bryan Bowlsbey, for this miraculous addition to American citizenry. We are looking forward to seeing little Maile as she grows and prospers in all of the chapters of her life ahead.

#### ROHINGYA HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Mr. President, while accepting his Nobel Peace Prize, the great humani-

tarian and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said: "Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe."

As we look around the world today, there are far too many places where men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, but a place that really stands out is the nation of Burma.

The Rohingya people have endured unimaginable pain and suffering. Since August of last year, with assaults by the military and nearby groups in Burma, 350 villages have been burned; women and girls of all ages have been raped; and over 700,000 Rohingya have fled their nation for neighboring Bangladesh to escape this horrific assault. In just the first month of this crisis, Doctors Without Borders said well over 6,000 Rohingya were killed, including hundreds of children under the age of 5. One U.N. adviser on genocide prevention said: "The Rohingya have endured what no human beings should ever have to endure."

Now we are seeing the brutality of the Burmese military, followed by a deliberate strategy of isolation and starvation.

Several times in recent years, Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times has traveled to Burma to report on the Rohingya. Earlier this year, he entered the country on a tourist visa. He was warned by the Burmese Government not to do any reporting, but he did. He traveled to a total of five Rohingya villages and worked hard to be able to see these places to which everyone was banned from going.

Back in November, a group of five Members of Congress went to visit these same villages—two Senators and three House Members. We were told by the Government of Burma that we would be allowed to visit the villages, but at the very last moment, the government rescinded its invitation. Two months earlier, in September of last year, the leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, had said to the United Nations that Burma had nothing to hide and that the international community was welcome to come and see for themselves. So five Members of Congress went to see for themselves and for their constituents and to be able to report back to the entire Nation, but we were not allowed to see these camps, these villages, that had been burned.

Nicholas Kristof did succeed in going. Here is what he wrote:

What I found was a slow-motion genocide. The massacres and machete attacks of last August are over for now, but Rohingya remain confined in their villages—and to a huge concentration camp—and are systematically denied most education and medical care. So they die. No one counts the deaths accurately, but my sense is that the Myanmar Government kills more Rohingya by denying them health care and sometimes food than by wielding machetes or firing bullets.

Matthew Smith, from the human rights group Fortify Rights, said:

"These tactics are right out of the genocidares' playbook . . . underfeeding and systematically weakening a population has been characteristic of other genocides."

We in the congressional delegation were not allowed to go to those villages to see for ourselves. We were allowed to go to Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, where the Rohingya live. In the capital, we were told we could visit Aung Mingalar. It is also called the Muslim Quarter. When I took this picture, I was standing in the Muslim Quarter, looking down the street. What you see is a police station at the end of the street and a barrier. This neighborhood is cut off from the rest of the capital.

If you think of the early stage of the Warsaw Ghetto, when people were not allowed to leave the neighborhood, that is what is happening right at this moment in the capital of Rakhine State in Sittwe. It is illegal for them to leave. In fact, the folks who live there have stores that have been locked up and shut for years because they are not allowed to leave this neighborhood and open their stores. There is a hospital right around the corner, and they are not allowed to go to it. Instead, they have to get safe passage to an internally displaced person's camp outside of Sittwe, get a referral slip, and come back to Sittwe to go to the hospital. There are incredibly difficult logistical challenges placed between this neighborhood and the hospital that is right next door.

This happens to be in the capital, where folks can stand along these fences and make trades for food, and they can receive on their smartphones international support. Yet imagine if you took this neighborhood and lifted it out of the city and placed it out in the countryside where there is no supporting community around the outside—maybe no cell service, so you can't receive money on your cell phone. There are 120,000 people who are living in these camps, IDP camps, in Rakhine State—120,000.

Then think of those folks who fled those 350 villages that were burned—who fled and saw their family members shot, their family members raped, their family members burned inside of the huts that were torched in those villages.

Nicholas Kristof writes: "The folks who remain are being subjected to slow-motion genocide through starvation and deprivation of medical resources."

This is beyond acceptable. That condition is a form of ethnic cleansing, a form of genocide, and the United States should be absolutely vigilant in leading the world to respond.

Those folks who fled to safety in Bangladesh are also continuing to experience extreme hardship. This is a picture from the hillside, which is where we were. There are still a few trees standing, but the trees have been coming down to provide firewood and

to provide various, little supports to keep the houses upright. Mostly, these little houses—these little shelters—are being built on split bamboo that is split into very tiny pieces, tied up into a frame, and then plastic is draped over it. It is hard to imagine what this camp is going to look like when the monsoons hit. The monsoons were supposed to hit a few weeks ago. They have not yet, but they could hit any day now, and these camps are going to become a devastated mess when that occurs.

There are now 900,000 Rohingya—700,000 from this last horrific year—and several hundred thousand from previous episodes in which they were attacked by the military. Terrible sanitation makes these camps a breeding ground for cholera, diphtheria, and measles. There is a lot of concern that when the flooding comes with the monsoons, that will be when the sanitation systems will overflow and contaminate the water, and the cholera epidemic will follow.

Save the Children and other organizations have said: “The Rohingya refugee crisis is a children’s emergency.”

Camps are full of young men and women. This little boy here had built a little, tiny kite and was flying it around—just a scrap of plastic and two little scraps of wood. When I first saw it fluttering in the air, I asked: What is that? He brought it down and showed us here. You can see the shadow on the ground. They are children who are just trying to be children, making a little toy.

This young man and the other children are the lucky ones who got out alive. The survivors tell us about infants being ripped from their mothers’ arms, thrown alive into the burning fires, toddlers murdered in front of their families, countless teenage girls and even younger raped. Infants and young children in both the IDP camps and the refugee camps are still dying of disease and malnutrition. Those who are surviving now have to grow up in camps like this. Where will they go? How will they thrive? They have to figure out right now just how to survive day-to-day.

When I was in Bangladesh and at this camp, there was an international group who had set up a tent and was enabling the kids to come and play games, to draw pictures, to sing songs. This young man here—by the way, here is Congressman CICILLINE from the House side—was showing me the drawing that he had made that shows helicopters shooting at the villages. This is a piece of what these children had experienced. Many of them have drawings of helicopters and trucks that are shooting at the villagers as their families flee. I hope that the children have many joys like making and flying kites, but they are carrying scars we cannot even begin to imagine.

Now these children—homeless, without a school or access to minimal healthcare—have to figure out how to go forward. In one of Nicholas Kristof’s

articles, he writes that he spoke to a 12-year-old child in a camp and asked him what he hoped to do when he grew up. That is a question we often ask children. What do you hope to be? What do you hope to do? The child responded: “I don’t have any dreams.” That is a fairly heartbreaking response—young age, dreams crushed, just the challenge of surviving day-to-day. Every child in the world deserves to be able to dream.

The Rohingya in Bangladesh today are facing an impossible challenge. They are in a refugee camp that is full of hundreds of thousands of people and that has inadequate infrastructure. They would like to be able to reclaim their villages and return home. Quite frankly, Bangladesh, which is hosting them, would like them to be able to reclaim their villages and return home, but they can’t do so without enormous effort on the behalf of the very government that sent its military to annihilate them. They need international protection. They need a change of heart of the leaders of Burma.

Aung San Suu Kyi is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate because she stood up for the democratic process and suffered years of home detention as she pushed to have democracy restored. We in the world have expected her to stand up for this community and say it is unacceptable for these Rohingya families to be persecuted, this community to be persecuted in this fashion, but she has not stood up. I know many Members here have encouraged her to reverse course and stand up and not be part of this ethnic cleansing and part of this genocide. Only with her change of heart, only with her championship, only with her determination to have Burma respected on the international stage and to have human rights respected in that nation will the return be able to happen.

Right now there is no expectation that this can occur. However, there was an interesting story this past week. Earlier this week, a Facebook post on the official page of Burma’s Information Committee showed a family being repatriated back—a family of five being repatriated. They were being checked out medically. They received packages of rice, mosquito nets, and blankets, according to this post. But do you know what? No one really believes this story. There is no international agency involved in protecting this family. Were they even refugees to begin with? We don’t know.

What we do know is that the story itself said they are not going to be able to return to their village. They are going to be sent to an IDP camp—an internally displaced persons camp. There are already 120,000 people in camps just like this. Those are prison camps. While this is meant as a public gesture to the world that Burma is going to protect this family, Burma is sending them to a prison camp. Let no one in the international community be fooled.

The publicity campaign also showed them receiving national verification cards, but not citizenship cards. They are not being welcomed back as citizens. They are still being stripped of their citizenship. Even in their best effort to pretend that they are doing something positive, this family is being denied citizenship and being sent to a prison camp.

The international world must respond. How are we to do so?

Let us all encourage the President of the United States—our President of the United States—to speak about this horrific international case of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Since August, we have not had one word from the leader of our country about this horrific crime. We need to hear from our President. The world needs to hear from our President.

Second, we need to pass the repatriation resolution that has passed the Foreign Relations Committee unanimously, calling for the safe and dignified, voluntary and sustainable return of the Rohingya people. It demands that the United Nations must be part of any formal agreement. It has the unanimous support of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Let’s put it on the floor and have the unanimous support of the Senate as well.

Third, let’s have on the floor and pass the sanctions bill called the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act. This, too, has passed committee. This targets the military, which perpetuated this genocide. It doesn’t allow those military leaders to travel to the United States. It doesn’t allow military weapons sales to Burma. It cuts off military cooperation, except for humanitarian cooperation and training, to target the military that perpetuated this crime and to send a signal that this is unacceptable. Who else in the world—what dictator in the world—is looking at what has occurred in Burma and saying: We, too, can drive out a minority community we have gotten tired of.

The United States must respond in force. We need to invest in the education of children who are in those refugee camps. They are there with no schools. If it takes several years for them to find a permanent home, if ever, we can’t afford to then go years without education, without schools. Let the international community invest in their education and let the United States lead in that effort.

Let’s give strong international support to Bangladesh. Bangladesh didn’t have to open their borders to this flow of 700,000 refugees from across the river in Burma, but they did. In a humanitarian way, they did. They said: We will not let you be shot down on the banks across on the other side. Come and find refuge.

But now, the Government of Bangladesh needs international support. They are a poor country—poor in a way we can’t even imagine. That nation is half the size of Oregon. When it floods,

it is a quarter of the size of Oregon. In my home State of Oregon, we have 4 million citizens. Bangladesh already has 160 million citizens. There is no space. That is why these camps are crowded onto hillsides and carved into the dirt, because there is no place for people to be set up on flat land where it is easy to establish facilities.

These five things are what we must do: first, for our President to be a vocal international leader and bring the international community together; second, to pass the repatriation resolution; third, to bring to the floor and to pass the sanctions bill, the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act; fourth, to send a message to Burma and the rest of the world to invest in the education of the children; and fifth, to give strong international support to Bangladesh, which is doing all it can but is in a very difficult spot to receive so many in an overcrowded and impoverished nation.

Elie Wiesel said: "Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe." Let us then make Burma and the refugee camps in Bangladesh the center of the universe and come to their assistance. I thank the Presiding Officer.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY).** The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### RUSSIAN ELECTION INTERFERENCE

**Mr. REED.** Mr. President, I come to the floor to continue my series of speeches about Russia's actions in the 2016 election and the threat that Russia poses for the 2018 midterm elections and our national security.

Free, fair, and open elections are the foundation of our country. The Framers created a unique system that has stood for over 200 years and served as a beacon around the world.

Regrettably, the Russian hybrid operations and malign influence against the 2016 election has put the sanctity and security of our democracy in question.

Our duty as citizens and as legislators is to recognize this crisis and take concrete steps to protect our democracy. We must foster a climate of vigilance and Federal-State cooperation when it comes to elections integrity. So today, I wanted to take a moment to review what happened and offer some steps that we should take immediately.

Some may say that there was no interference and that talking about Russia's meddling against our democratic institutions is "fake news." I wish it were "fake news", but the facts are very clear and are acknowledged by experts of every political viewpoint. Let me take a moment to review what happened before I discuss the threat and what we should do.

Fifteen months have now passed since the intelligence community released its assessment, which concluded that the Kremlin attacked the heart of our democracy by interfering with our

elections process. This operation sought to weaken our democratic institutions, amplify and exacerbate societal tensions, and generally sow chaos.

There is clear evidence that the Kremlin sought to influence the 2016 Presidential election. The key findings of the intelligence community's assessment were these:

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

Moscow's influence campaign followed a Russian messaging strategy that blends covert intelligence operations—such as cyber activity—with overt efforts by Russian government agencies, state-funded media, third-party intermediaries, and paid social media users or "trolls."

Russia's state-run propaganda machine contributed to the influence campaign by serving as a platform for Kremlin messaging to Russian and international audiences.

In February of this year, leaders of the intelligence community appeared before the Senate Intelligence Committee and reaffirmed these findings. In a related action, in February, the special counsel's office issued indictments against 13 Kremlin-linked trolls for conducting "information warfare against the United States" with the purpose of interfering with U.S. political and electoral processes, including the 2016 U.S. Presidential election.

These tactics are aspects of a larger coordinated operation of hybrid aggression conducted by the Kremlin, using the broad spectrum of military and nonmilitary tools at its disposal. The main tenets of the Kremlin's hybrid operations are these: information operations with cyber tools, which people commonly think of as hacking; propaganda and disinformation; manipulation of social media; and malign influence, which can be deployed through political and financial channels.

Furthermore, throughout this hybrid campaign, Russia has denied its involvement and engaged in deception to hide its fingerprints.

Russia recognizes that, for now, its military capabilities are limited relative to the United States and NATO, and it will seek to avoid a direct military conflict with the West. Instead, Russian tactics leverage their strengths and exploit our open society and free markets in ways that they hope will have a strategic impact without leading to conventional war.

As laid out in the "Russian National Security Strategy" in 2015, the Kremlin's approach to how they respond to conflict includes weaponizing tools and resources from across their government and society.

The Russian strategy states:

Interrelated political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic, informational, and other measures are being developed and implemented in order to ensure strategic deterrence and the prevention of armed conflicts.

This strategy describes the conventional and nonconventional use of war-

fare as the Kremlin sees it and how Russia has utilized all the tools of statecraft to engage an adversary without, in many cases, actually firing actual shots. These different disciplines together can be called a Russian hybrid approach to confrontation below the threshold of direct armed conflict, which has been developing and escalating since the earliest days of Putin's rise to power.

Russia's attacks have not ceased since the 2016 election. As former FBI Director James Comey so presciently stated about the Russians, "They'll be back."

Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper assessed that the Kremlin has "been emboldened" by the success of their operations to date and warned that hybrid operations "will continue." At a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing in February, CIA Director Pompeo confirmed that the intelligence community has seen "Russian activity and intentions" to affect the 2018 midterm elections.

Director of National Intelligence Coats stated at this same hearing that our intelligence experts expect that Russia will conduct bolder and more disruptive cyber operations in the coming year. The agency heads from across our intelligence community agreed with this assessment.

The warnings from our current and former intelligence officials appear to be spot-on. There has been a steady pace of Russian hybrid operations deployed against us, our allies, and partners, with varying degrees of intensity and mixes of tools and methods. The techniques unleashed against us in the 2016 elections as laid out by our intelligence community were deployed with maximum intensity during last year's French Presidential elections. There was also evidence of hybrid operations against the German Federal elections held in September of 2017. Kremlin-linked trolls targeted the people of Spain, exacerbating divisions during the referendum on Catalonian independence. Outgoing National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster said we have seen "initial signs" that the Kremlin is using tools from its hybrid arsenal against the upcoming Mexican elections. After last month's poisoning of the former Russian spy and his daughter on British soil, an estimated 2,800 Kremlin-linked bots were unleashed to cast doubt on Prime Minister May's assessment that Russia was responsible and to amplify divisions among the British people. While the majority of the interference appears to have come from Russia, others are catching on and deploying these tools as well.

As highlighted in the Economist last week, a coalition of Indonesian religious extremist groups used propaganda and disinformation to affect a local election in Jakarta last year. The frontrunner, a Christian, was falsely accused of insulting Islam and huge rallies were organized against him. In the end, he lost to a candidate that

held the support of Muslim groups. This more overt interference has been coupled with covert information operations, using social media to smear candidates they deem “not Muslim enough.”

A second Christian candidate in upcoming Indonesian regional elections has been portrayed as a front for Christian domination in a country that has an estimated 90-percent Muslim population and has been featured in a video that falsely claimed that he was part of a massive church building campaign.

With voters in this area spending an average of 4 to 5 hours a day looking at social media on their phones, videos and messages have quickly gone viral. As this example highlights, these campaigns don’t even have to be sophisticated. They use tactics out of the Kremlin’s playbook and they indicate how ubiquitous this type of activity is becoming across the world.

We also continue to see evidence of the Kremlin and Kremlin-linked agents deploy hybrid tools to sow division, exacerbate racial and religious divides, and amplify social tensions here at home. We don’t have to look far for examples.

Kremlin-linked trolls flooded Twitter with messages intended to sow division and disinformation in the wake of the tragic shootings in Las Vegas and Parkland, FL.

During the special election to fill the Alabama Senate seat vacated by now-Attorney General Jeff Sessions, one candidate gained 1,100 Russian-origin Twitter followers over a 3-day period, with many of the accounts appearing to be artificial.

January press reports indicate that Fancy Bear—the Russian military-linked hackers who perpetrated attacks on the Democratic National Committee in the 2016 election—have been attempting to penetrate the emails of Senate offices in the run-up to the 2018 midterm elections.

Kremlin propaganda outlets RT and Sputnik continue to try to capitalize on our open press and public debates to spread disinformation and amplify division.

In sum, Kremlin and Kremlin-linked agents are still trying to hack us, our allies, and partners to fuel their information operations. They are still using trolls and bots to manipulate social media and targeting us with disinformation campaigns and still deploying propaganda.

In the absence of strategic action to deter these kinds of attacks, Russia sees our 2018 midterm elections as another prime target.

Despite this threat and multiple warnings from across our intelligence community, Trump administration officials have testified to Congress dating back to last spring that the President has not directed his Cabinet or senior staff to work on a strategy to protect our democratic institutions. When I asked Defense Secretary Mattis on June 13, 2017, whether the President

had directed him to begin intensive planning to protect our electoral system against the next Russian cyber attack, he was not able to point to any guidance indicating that the President recognizes the urgency of the Russian threat or the necessity of preparing to counter it during midterm elections.

On June 21, 2017, I asked officials from the Department of Homeland Security, who are in charge of election security, whether the President had directed them to come up with a plan to protect our critical election infrastructure. They responded no.

On October 19, 2017, I asked leading officials from the Pentagon, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security, who are in charge of protecting critical cyber infrastructure, including our electoral infrastructure, if the President had directed them to counter the Russian threat. They could not point to any specific direction coming from the White House to do so.

On February 13, 2018, I asked the top directors of our intelligence community whether the President had directed them to take specific action to blunt or disrupt ongoing Russian influence activities. I received no affirmative responses. FBI Director Wray said he had not been “specifically directed by the President.” Admiral Rogers, who serves as head of both the National Security Agency and Cyber Command, responded: “I can’t say that I have been explicitly directed to ‘blunt or actively stop.’” The other witnesses could not point to any directives from the President to confront or blunt Russian influence operations either.

On February 27, 2018, I asked Admiral Rogers whether he has the authority and the capability to disrupt hacking operations where they originate. He responded that he does not have the authority from the President to go after these perpetrators and stated that the government as a whole has so far, in his words, “opted not to engage.”

The bottom line is that the President has not directed anyone in the intelligence community, his Cabinet, or elsewhere in his administration to develop or implement a strategy to disrupt, blunt, or retaliate against Russia for its hybrid aggression against our democracy. This threat is clear, and it only grows as we move closer to our midterm elections in November. It is past time for the President to step up and provide strategic leadership against Russian interference.

Russia has gone to school on our social and political divisions and our democratic institutions and will continue to adapt. They have learned how to exploit our vulnerabilities and are planning future operations to hit our blind spots. We are fooling ourselves if we are only looking to protect against the threats from the last Russian operation. We need to be prepared to blunt what comes next.

February testimony from the Armed Services Cybersecurity Subcommittee

highlights this evolving threat. Professor Richard Harknett, a cyber security expert from the University of Cincinnati, warned that Russia’s 2016 campaign against our elections was the “stone age” relative to the sophistication of cyber activities we are likely to see in the coming elections. Similarly, Russia expert Heather Conley from the Center for Strategic and International Studies testified at the same hearing. She said:

If we’re preparing for what Russia did in 2016, it will be very different in November. It will be very different in 2020. It will look more American. It will look less Russian. And so this is adaptation. We are already fighting the last war.

As an article from the May issue of “Atlantic” portrayed, we may soon find ourselves in an era where doctored images are used to further aspects of hybrid operations. New technology exists that can superimpose a person onto video of an activity they did not participate in. Franklin Foer, the author, wrote of this phenomenon:

The genre is one of the cruelest, most invasive forms of identity theft invented in the internet era. . . . A casual observer can’t easily detect the hoax.

As was highlighted recently on a “60 Minutes” show, we know the Russians targeted election systems in 21 States in the 2016 election and that Kremlin or Kremlin-linked actors compromised websites or voter registration systems in 7 States. The fact we have not yet taken steps to correct all the vulnerabilities does not inspire confidence for the 2018 midterm elections. Former FBI agent and expert on Russian information operations, Clint Watts, said recently on “Meet the Press,” “at this point we can’t ensure the vote is accurate or not changed” and that his number one priority would be protecting the elections and the vote ahead of the 2018 elections. We cannot continue to have a wait-and-see attitude with regard to the Kremlin’s hybrid operations because, next time, it could and likely will be worse. They might actually be able to change ballots or tamper with voter rolls or carry out another operation entirely that we haven’t even thought of.

We are behind the curve in preparing our defenses against Russian interference in 2018—these elections that are coming. Even by the administration’s own admission, we are not doing enough. At an October 18, 2017, hearing, Senator SASSE asked Attorney General Sessions whether the administration had prepared to counter future interference by Russia and other foreign adversaries in the information space. Attorney General Sessions responded:

Probably not. We’re not. And the matter is so complex that for most of us, we are not able to fully grasp the technical dangers that are out there.

This is not an acceptable response to such a pressing problem. Russia attacked the heart of our democracy, and if we do not try to find solutions and guard our infrastructure, we are derelict in our duties.

One of the last acts of the Obama administration was to deem election infrastructure critical, which put it in a priority category for assistance to guard against election interference. While appropriate and important, that is the mere beginning of a solution, and we have hardly progressed in the last 14 months.

I recently asked General Curt Scaparrotti, the head of European Command, who is on the frontline of blunting Russian aggression in Europe, whether we had a sufficient whole-of-government to combat such hybrid operations. He responded that we did not have an “effective unification” across the government and affirmed that additional focus was needed immediately because of the nature of the threat.

We need a whole-of-government approach with the weight of the White House behind it. We need an approach that will enable coordination across the different agencies of our government and support effective outreach and collaboration with State and local officials and the private sector, including the media. Given the nature of Russia’s asymmetric aggression, conducted below the level of direct military conflict, we must deploy a range of tools, including cyber; diplomacy; economic sanctions; financial investigations to counter foreign corruption, money laundering, and malign political influence; and strategic communications.

This administration has not effectively employed the nonmilitary tools in its arsenal, and it has been slow to respond in any meaningful way. The administration’s dithering is exemplified in its foot-dragging in utilizing the State Department’s Global Engagement Center to counter Russian propaganda and its delay in implementing sanctions to punish Russia. While recent actions to expel Russian diplomats after the poisoning of the Russian spy and his daughter on British soil and the decision to finally implement sanctions targeted against Putin’s base of power are encouraging, they do not add up to a policy of effective deterrence.

In this regard, I would note that a former senior Defense Department cyber policymaker recently testified to the Armed Services Committee that a standing joint interagency task force is required to bring to bear the right capabilities and resources spread across the government to respond effectively to Russian aggression. Such a task force would utilize expertise from across our government, including the intelligence community, the Department of Defense, the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Treasury Department, and would allow effective coordination and collaboration on policy to counter Russia. The minority staff report of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Russian asymmetric operations in Europe recommended a similar mechanism. I think this is a good way forward, and I intend to continue

to work with my colleagues on the Foreign Relations Committees and other committees of jurisdiction on how best to stand up such a capability.

The Senate Intelligence Committee, of which I am a member, has recently issued recommendations to improve election security. The committee urges retaining States’ primacy in running elections and providing them with necessary assistance; creating effective deterrence; improving information sharing on threats; and securing election-related systems. All of these are important steps and should be implemented without delay.

Several of my Senate colleagues have thoughtfully incorporated these recommendations into legislation, the Secure Elections Act, and I strongly support this effort. This bill would improve information sharing between Federal Government and local election agencies, assist States with cyber security preparedness, and support them in replacing outdated and insecure electronic voting machines. I thank Senators KLOBUCHAR, LANKFORD, GRAHAM, COLLINS, and HEINRICH for their work on this bill, and I look forward to working with them on further legislation to protect the institutions that are essential to our democracy.

As I laid out, these operations against our elections are part of a broad pattern of Russian hybrid attacks against us and our allies and partners. As Vice President Biden and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Carpenter reminded us in a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*:

More than a decade has passed since Estonia became the first NATO country to see its government institutions and media organizations attacked by hackers based in Russia. In the intervening period, the risk of a far more debilitating attack has increased, but planning for how to defend against it has lagged.

There are countries, such as those in the Baltics, that have been dealing with these Russian threats for far longer than we have and have developed effective approaches for countering them.

Department of Defense National Guard units, which regularly deploy to Eastern Europe and the Baltics, may be uniquely positioned to share information on Russian hybrid attacks with State and local officials and explain procedures they learn from our European partners.

With regard to building credible deterrence—one of the Intelligence Committee’s key recommendations—it does not appear that we have mounted an effective policy against Russia. As DNI Coats testified earlier this year, Russian influence operations in cyber space are intended to achieve “strategic objectives” and will continue unless and until there are clear repercussions for Russia. In February, Lieutenant General Nakasone testified to the Armed Services Committee that the Russians, amongst several other adversaries, don’t fear us and have cal-

culated that, in his words, “not much will happen to them” in retaliation for cyber attacks on America. Cyber Commander Admiral Rogers also testified in February to the Armed Services Committee that Vladimir Putin has concluded there is little price to pay for Russian aggression against the United States, and he has no incentive to stop these hybrid attacks. In outgoing National Security Advisor McMaster’s last remarks, he even admitted “we have failed to impose sufficient costs” on Russia.

In the absence of Presidential leadership to set a policy to blunt Russian aggression and send the message to our foreign adversaries that we will not stand for attacks of this nature, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 requires a comprehensive plan from the administration to counter Russian malign influence. That plan is overdue. The Act also requires that the President develop a national cyber policy, including any capabilities that be used to impose costs on adversaries in response to a cyber attack or malicious cyber activity. There is no time to waste, and I urge the administration to deliver these strategies and actually implement them, which would work toward imposing costs on our foreign adversaries.

I intend to return to speak further on these issues, as I believe the American people deserve a comprehensive explanation of the threats that face our democracy. I also intend to work with my colleagues on additional measures to secure our political system and election infrastructure against malign foreign influence.

None of this is to say that States will lose their traditional primacy over elections. Rhode Island is one of the States that is taking this issue very seriously by adopting new technologies to streamline voting and guard voter information.

My State is also working with the Department of Homeland Security to shore up election security, but election security must be a national priority, and the Federal Government must be a reliable partner. I must commend our Secretary of State, Nellie Gorbea, for her great efforts.

One thing remains clear. The Russians attacked our elections process—the heart of our democracy—and are primed to do it again unless the administration provides effective deterrence. This is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue; it is an issue of national security. As the old saying goes, “Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.” We have no time to waste.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO DIMITRI PHILEMONOF

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, today I rise, as I like to do at the end of the week, to talk about somebody in my State who has made a real big difference to Alaska and, in many ways,

to the country. It is a good opportunity for me to come down on the floor and brag a little bit about Alaska, although my State does a really good job of selling itself anyway. It is what we refer to in my office as the Alaskan of the Week.

It is a great opportunity to talk about not just the wonderful things we have in Alaska—the wonderful mountains, oceans, and how beautiful the State is. Right now, the Sun is out again and shining high. The snow is melting. The buds are coming out and birds are coming back. It is a good opportunity for me to talk not just about the natural wonders but the people who make Alaska such a great place.

While it doesn't get as much attention as it deserves, there is an incredibly fascinating and sometimes tragic history of my State. It is a good opportunity for me to talk to my colleagues about that and the people who have worked hard and have been part of that history and have helped to heal some of the scars that have been left from that history.

Along with talking about the beauty of Alaska every week, we talk about someone who has made a difference. This week, I would like to recognize Dimitri Philemonof and all the work he has done over the decades for his community, for his State, and really for his country.

Dimitri was born in 1944 to Erena and Isaac Philemonof on the breathtaking, beautiful St. George Island, one of the two principal islands of the Pribilof Islands in Alaska. Surrounded by the Bering Sea, the Pribilofs are about 750 miles from Anchorage and about 500 miles from the Siberian Coast. The Pribilofs are really one of the Wonders of the World, particularly with the nature that is there—Steller sea lions, walrus, sea otters, and tens of thousands of fur seals. Depending on the season, more than 2.5 million seabirds call the Pribilof Islands their home. The “Galapagos of the North,” it is sometimes called because of this teeming wildlife.

You will also find in the Pribilofs the warmest, most resilient people anywhere in the world. The Pribilofs, as well as the entire Aleutian Island chain, has a storied and, to be honest, sometimes painful history in our country—a history that has shaped Dimitri's life.

First, when Alaska was a colonial possession of Russia, Russian fur seekers decimated the Aleut Native populations on these islands through warfare, disease, and, yes, even slavery. Then, 75 years after the United States purchased Alaska during World War II, Japan invaded and occupied Kiska and Attu, the westernmost islands of Alaska's Aleutian Island chain. A lot of Americans don't know that American territory was invaded and occupied by the Japanese during World War II. It was the first time since the War of 1812 that American soil had been occupied by an enemy. The Japanese dug in and

held these two islands in Alaska until mid-1943, when American forces recaptured Kiska and Attu in a brutal campaign in the cold of Alaska.

That campaign to retake Kiska and Attu resulted in the deaths of about 1,500 American servicemen. More than 600 were missing, and almost 3,500 were wounded in action. It was a major battle of World War II. Less well known is the impact this conflict had on the Aleut peoples of Alaska. As a result of the invasion, nearly 900 Aleut civilian residents of the Pribilof Islands and the Aleutian Islands in Alaska were relocated to temporary internment camps in Southeast Alaska. Among those interned were Dimitri's parents, two of his brothers, and a sister who was born in the camp. Dimitri himself jokes and laughs that, in his words, he was actually “conceived” in the camp.

The treatment of our American citizens—and these are great American citizens. They are patriotic. They serve in the military at higher rates than any other ethnic group in the country. The treatment of these American citizens in these camps is a dark spot in American history that not many Americans are aware of. Camps were basically abandoned buildings. The conditions were awful—crowded, unheated, and unsanitary. Some even died in the camps as a result of these horrendous conditions. These were our citizens in our country.

Yet, like so many Alaskan Natives who were not treated well by our government during this time, Dimitri, nevertheless, signed up when he was of age to serve his country in the military. In the 1960s, he joined the Army and served in the Pathfinder Detachment at Fort Rucker in Alabama. He was an Airborne soldier.

Eventually, Dimitri made his way back to Alaska. He met his wife Victoria and started a family. He is the proud father of five, and he began to work at the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association. He is now the President and CEO of the Association.

The association has had numerous accomplishments under his leadership. Since 1985, it has greatly expanded its programs for the people of the Pribilofs and the Aleutians, and its budget has grown from about \$2.5 million to more than \$18 million to fund these important service programs under his leadership.

For years, he did something that was so important that this body was involved here in the Senate. He worked closely with Alaska's congressional delegation at the time—Senator Ted Stevens, Senator Frank Murkowski, and Congressman DON YOUNG—to work on educating the Congress and the Senate about this difficult history during World War II and to help pass legislation entitled the “Aleutian and Pribilof Islands Restitution Act,” which compensated surviving Aleut victims of the internment camps. Again, American citizens were sent by their government during the war to in-

ternment camps in Alaska. Not many people know that history.

Dimitri not only knew it, he lived it. His family lived it, but what he did was so powerful. He helped heal it. He helped heal it right here on the floor of the Senate.

He then helped pass the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands Restitution Trust to oversee money allocated to rebuild some of the buildings and houses in this part of Alaska that were destroyed during the war—in the fierce battles that raged in my State during World War II that not many Americans are aware of.

That is a great life and service. Dimitri is also an artist helping to preserve Alaska Native culture through his beautiful drawings—particularly of Russian Orthodox Churches in the region—churches he has worked tirelessly to maintain throughout Alaska. These are beautiful churches. He also does an incredible Elvis Presley impersonation.

He is a man of faith, of perseverance, and kindness. As I have mentioned here, and tried to highlight just a little bit of his life, he has devoted his whole life to his people, to my State, and to this great Nation. In May, he will be recognized by his colleagues for 40 years of humanitarian service and for helping heal the wounds of this country that came about during World War II. We thank him for all he has done in his beloved Pribilofs, in Alaska, in America, and on the floor of the Senate.

Dimitri, I want to thank you, once again, and congratulate you on being our Alaskan of the Week.

#### COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. President, I want to give a little bit of an update on what has been happening on the Senate floor in the last few days because there is a lot going on. I think sometimes it is important to explain to people watching in the Gallery, people watching on TV, and the people watching back home in Alaska what is happening here.

We had a big vote yesterday. It was a big vote particularly for my State but also for the Presiding Officer's State of Louisiana—any coastal State. It was a vote on the Coast Guard bill yesterday. It was a strong bipartisan vote, but we just missed getting 60 Senators.

To be perfectly honest, it was a disappointment. It was certainly a disappointment to the men and women in the Coast Guard who are serving our country all over not only America but the world—exceptional service.

This body was unable to get the authorization bill that sets the policies and funding and spending for the Coast Guard. That was sad, in my view—a big disappointment. We have principled differences here in the Senate, but we have been working hard on this. We have been working very hard across the aisle.

I chair the Subcommittee on the Coast Guard. We tried to make sure we had plenty of Senators who would support this, so my team and I worked for



months on accommodating my colleagues' concerns about the bill. In certain ways, we pretty much accommodated every request for an amendment and every request for fixing the bill. So I really thought we were going to get to the point where we had way more than 60 Senators to pass this bill for the men and women of the Coast Guard, to make our waterway economic opportunities more efficient, and to put more maritime workers to work, but at the end of the day, we couldn't get to that magic number of 60, which is so critical here in the Senate. It is disappointing to say that politics got in the way. There were some people who had previously committed to make sure this got over the goal line who weren't there at the end. But we will keep working on it. It is too important for my State and too important for the country to leave the men and women of the Coast Guard and so many other important issues that were taken up in that bill not completed. That is what we call the legislative calendar—that is legislation on the Senate floor we are trying to move, and we will keep working in a bipartisan way there.

#### NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Now, Mr. President, I want to talk a little bit about an issue as it relates to the Executive Calendar. What do I mean when I am talking about the Executive Calendar? Well, in the Senate, under the U.S. Constitution, we are in the personnel business in addition to being in the legislative business. Under the Constitution, we have a role—the advice and consent power of the Senate to confirm the nominees who run the government. That comes from the executive branch. The White House—the President puts forward nominations, and we hold hearings and we confirm them.

I have been speaking on the floor a lot about this lately because, by any historical measure, unfortunately the Senate has slowed down, delayed, and obstructed the confirmation of individuals from the Trump administration whom we are trying to get confirmed to serve in the government. That is also sad. That is also disappointing. The statistics are very obvious.

A lot of us have tried to get the press who usually sits up there in the Gallery to write about this. They don't seem to care, but they should care. The American people should care.

Whether or not you voted for this President, once somebody wins an election and they start putting people forward—good Americans—to serve in the government, what we should be doing here is holding hearings, seeing if they are qualified, and then voting on whether to confirm them. Unfortunately, what is happening—and it is all out there—by any historical measure, my colleagues on the other side have filibustered and obstructed this administration's nominees to serve their country at a higher rate than has ever happened in U.S. history.

I have come down here and talked about this a lot. I keep coming down to ask the Senate minority leader and some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle: Why are you doing this? Why are you doing this?

I will give just one example. In the first not even 18 months of the Trump administration, the filibuster—that is a procedure used here in the Senate that could require much extended debate—the filibuster has been used more in the first 18 months than it was in the previous four administrations combined.

Why? I have been asking the question, why are you doing this? They don't really have an answer. I haven't heard anyone explain it. I know part of their base is very upset about the election a year and a half ago, but it is time to govern now. We have to get people in place and just vote on them. If you don't like them, if you don't think they are qualified, vote no. But time and again, we have qualified people who are being held up for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 months for no reason, and it just doesn't make any sense.

The reason I am mentioning this is that there is now talk that it is not just in terms of a filibuster, but there is a possibility that my colleagues on the other side, as a total group, all of them, might come together and all vote against the President's most recent nominee to be the Secretary of State. That is the current CIA Director, Mike Pompeo.

I certainly didn't agree with everything the Obama administration did, but if you look at the history of the United States, particularly as it relates to nominees to head government agencies, to run national security agencies—the Department of Defense, the Secretary of State—these have typically been given a lot of leeway from the Senate.

For example, just in my relatively short career here—I sit on the Armed Services Committee—President Obama put forward a number of candidates to serve in the government at high levels in the Department of Defense to help run our national security. One was the Secretary of Defense. I didn't agree with Secretary Ash Carter on everything, but what I did was I sat down with him, had discussions with him, and we brought him up for a floor vote, and I voted to support him.

Let me give another example—Secretary of the Army Eric Fanning, put forward by President Obama. I didn't agree with everything Secretary Fanning was focused on. I sat down with him and had good discussions with him. He was actually being held up by some Republicans, and I worked to try to get him freed and confirmed.

They were well-qualified individuals.

Again, even if you don't agree with everything that an administration is doing in terms of foreign policy—there were elements of the Obama foreign policy that I supported, and there were a lot of elements that I didn't like.

When they put forward well-qualified individuals, I thought it was the duty of the Senate to sit down with them, meet with them, discuss your issues with them, and then vote on them.

Typically, in that realm, the individual had been supported, whether they are a Democrat or a Republican. Let me give a couple of examples. Secretary of State Tillerson had 55 Senators vote for him. Secretary of State John Kerry—94 Senators voted for him. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton—94 Senators voted for her. Condoleezza Rice—I worked for Condoleezza Rice for a number of years. She was a phenomenal Secretary of State. Eighty-five Senators voted for her. Secretary Colin Powell—voice vote. That means essentially 100 Senators voted for Secretary Powell. Secretary Madeleine Albright—I have gotten to know Madeleine Albright over a number of years. I have a deep respect for her, a Democrat. That vote was 99 to 0. Warren Christopher, another Democrat—a voice vote. That means 100, essentially. James Baker—another Secretary of State I have gotten to know over the years—99 to 0.

You see, this is deep history where, in this body, you are not going to agree with everything with regard to a President's foreign policy, but on these kinds of nominations, the history of this body and our Nation has typically been to be supportive.

Mike Pompeo is the current Director of the CIA. My friend from Tennessee, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, BOB CORKER, gave a speech earlier today. He talked about Mike Pompeo's qualifications. They are very impressive qualifications.

He went to West Point. By the way, he graduated No. 1 in his class at West Point. He went to Harvard Law School. By the way, he was the editor of the Harvard Law Review. This is a smart guy at the top institutions in America. He served in the Army. He served in Congress. He was very involved in foreign policy when he was a Member of Congress. He was a businessman and now is the Director of the CIA. Probably in terms of an individual in Washington, DC, who has insights on what is going on around the world in terms of our national security challenges, there is probably no one who has more insights on this than Mike Pompeo right now.

There is no doubt, by any measure, by any standard, historical standard, that when you look at our previous Secretaries of State, Mike Pompeo is well qualified. He is well qualified.

There is talk—and I hope it is only talk—that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are going to, en masse, vote against him. This would be getting into some dangerous territory for the United States as a country. As I mentioned, the tradition of this body is to vote to support the President's Secretary of State, particularly if he or she is a well-qualified individual.

The other side has been criticizing the Trump administration for not having enough nominees at, for example, the State Department. To be honest, I think some of that criticism is fair. We need to get out more nominees. The White House needs to get out more Ambassadors, more Assistant Secretaries, and more Under Secretaries. But, as I have mentioned to my colleagues a couple of times, they can't have it both ways. They can't have it both ways. What do I mean by that? You can't say to the administration "Hey, you need more Ambassadors. You need more Assistant Secretaries. You need a Secretary of State to run our foreign policy" and then, when those people are nominated by the President, delay, delay, delay. That is having it both ways, particularly if it is a candidate like Mike Pompeo, who is very well qualified.

Another criticism from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is that there is just too much chaos in the administration right now, too much chaos in foreign policy, domestically and internationally. There is some truth to that, also, I am not going to deny that. But part of the reason there have been challenges at the State Department is that this body has been slow-rolling confirmation of the nominations.

Again, you can't say "We don't want the chaos" and then talk about voting along party lines to derail the nomination of Mike Pompeo, because that will actually continue and create the kind of chaos that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are railing against and say they don't want.

Chaos in the national security and foreign policy personnel world—that is not what we need. Nobody should be for that. Nobody should be for that.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a Washington Post editorial from just a couple of days ago that simply reads "Confirm Mike Pompeo."

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

[From The Washington Post, Apr. 12, 2018]

CONFIRM MIKE POMPEO

(By Editorial Board)

Mike Pompeo's confirmation hearing to become secretary of state arrived at a moment when the Trump administration is grappling with a chaotic confluence of actual and looming foreign crises—including some of its own making. President Trump is contemplating military strikes against Syria while also pushing for a U.S. pullout; he has committed to attempting to negotiate a nuclear deal with North Korea while threatening to repudiate the nuclear pact with Iran. He is waging a trade war against China and Japan while counting on their strategic cooperation against the regime of Kim Jong Un. And he is doing all this with a badly depleted national security apparatus: Dozens of senior positions are vacant at the State Department, and the newly arrived national security adviser, John Bolton, has started with a purge of senior staff at the White House.

Mr. Pompeo, who has a reputation as a hawk and who in Congress relentlessly pur-

sued groundless attacks against Hillary Clinton's State Department, did his best on Thursday to be reassuring. He stressed that he favored diplomatic solutions with Iran and North Korea; he played down the likely consequences of a decision by Mr. Trump to scrap the Iran deal next month. Importantly, he promised to defend the State Department's budget and to quickly seek to fill its many vacant positions, which would be a welcome departure from the odd management style of the departed Rex Tillerson.

As has frequently been the case during the past year, it was not always clear if Mr. Trump and his nominee are in agreement on major issues. Mr. Pompeo was tough on Russia, saying conflicts with it were caused by "Russia's bad behavior"; Mr. Trump tweeted Wednesday that "much of the bad blood with Russia is caused by the Fake & Corrupt Russia Investigation." Mr. Pompeo acknowledged that sanctions against Vladimir Putin's regime had been inadequate and promised to "reset . . . deterrence." But Mr. Trump tweeted that there was "no reason" for poor relations and suggested the United States should aid the Russian economy and "stop the arms race."

In this, Mr. Pompeo sounded much like his predecessor Mr. Tillerson, who often pushed Mr. Trump to be tougher on Mr. Putin and to resist reflexive impulses to pull U.S. forces out of Afghanistan and Syria. On human rights, as in support for the State Department, Mr. Pompeo sounded like an improvement, saying "we should defend American values every place we go," including to allies such as Egypt. Democracy promotion, he said, "is an important tool of foreign policy"—an idea that neither Mr. Tillerson nor Mr. Trump has supported. Though he reiterated his opposition to gay marriage, Mr. Pompeo said he would defend the rights of LGBT people both in the State Department and abroad.

Democrats who pressed Mr. Pompeo on his record, including his questionable statements about Muslims, have legitimate concerns. But rejecting or delaying his nomination, as Mr. Trump juggles multiple crises without adequate counsel, probably would make an already parlous situation worse. Mr. Pompeo should be deployed to Foggy Bottom in the hope that he will fulfill his promise to revive and reassert U.S. diplomacy.

Mr. SULLIVAN. The Washington Post has not necessarily been a strong supporter of the Trump administration, but right here in their editorial, they are saying that the Senate needs to confirm Mike Pompeo.

They make the point that I am trying to make here in my remarks, which is that rejecting or delaying Pompeo's nomination as Mr. Trump juggles multiple crises around the world without adequate counsel would probably make an already parlous situation worse.

"Mike Pompeo should be deployed to Foggy Bottom"—that is the State Department—"in the hope that he will fulfill his promise to revive and reassert U.S. diplomacy." That is from the Washington Post article, and I think it is wise counsel for everybody here—Republicans, Democrats, all of us.

Bipartisanship is important to move things along in the Senate, whether it is the Coast Guard bill or well-qualified nominees in the national security world, and it has certainly been a U.S. tradition with regard to the Secretary

of State that not only goes back decades but centuries.

I am hoping that my colleagues sit down and talk to Mike Pompeo if they have issues with him, and raise them, but let's get to the floor, and let's confirm him as the Secretary of State because the State Department needs a well-qualified individual to run that important agency, and so does our country.

I yield the floor.

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

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

THE NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a milestone that happened about 3 weeks ago.

We have a couple of interesting dates. April 15 just passed. We call it tax day. But it was another day. It was also the date we were supposed to complete the Senate budget for fiscal year 2019, which starts on October 1 of this year. Well, April 15 came, and the IRS deadline did indeed hit, but there was no budget completed. This is part of the dysfunction that people back home are so upset about. I want to talk about that today, but first I want to talk about the derivative of that broken process.

In my office, we have a debt clock. A few weeks ago, that debt clock passed a milestone: \$21 trillion. If that weren't bad enough, the commitments of this Federal Government over the last 50 years—actually, indeed, over the last 100 years—the commitments that have been made in the structural programs of this big government bureaucracy have committed us to some \$130 trillion over just the next 30 years.

That means that every household in America owes the equivalent of \$1 million per household. These are not theoretic numbers. These are mathematical realities derived from commitments made by a lot of our programs that we have passed over the last 100 years in this country.

In my opinion, we are well past the tipping point with this debt. Last week, the CBO came out with their new forecast for fiscal year 2018 and beyond. I want to talk about that today because there are some dramatic revelations in there. At \$21 trillion, we are already well past the tipping point of this crisis.

In my opinion, the CBO forecasts don't do a very good job of forecasting revenue. For example, they take very little account of foreign direct investment. They underestimate the impact of the change to the repatriation tax law we just made. I believe the revenue forecast is out of line, but I do agree with their forecast of expenses, and I



think therein lies a great learning, if we will pay attention to it.

In their forecast, on top of the \$21 trillion we just crossed over, their projection is that we will add another \$10 trillion or more to this debt. Whether I might quibble with that a little bit or not, it is directionally correct. Because of that, I am on the floor of the Senate tonight talking about the crisis and the tipping point we are well past, because we are out of time to deal with this.

In just the next 5 years, the interest on this debt alone, in the year 2023, will be greater than the amount of money we spend on the defense of this country, and that assumes a very low forecast for interest rates. One of the reasons for that is that the last administration, instead of buying bonds or putting out bonds that were longer in duration, put out bonds that were shorter in duration because they had a little lower interest rate—interest rates were fundamentally zero—and the rest of the world put out longer duration bonds. So what happens is that these shorter duration bonds are maturing, and when they mature they have to go out at more and more expensive rates.

In just the last 18 months, the Fed fund rate has been increased six times, one-quarter point each. That 150 basis points on our size debt is more than \$300 billion a year. As a matter of fact—and this is not a forecast—this year, the interest on our debt, the interest that we pay, is \$50 billion more than just last year—\$50 billion more than we spent last year. Fifty billion dollars—this is a train wreck coming at us, and Congress has been reluctant to deal with it straight-up.

Every year, we go through a budget process. I have been in the budget process now for 3 years, since I got here. The first year we did a budget, it took \$7.5 trillion out of the expense plan for the next 10 years—but it lasted 4 months. It was waived by this body in order to get to a grand bargain so the other side would vote for funding the government by the end of that fiscal year and so we wouldn't have a shut-down.

Last year, there was no budget done. It was basically deemed so Republicans could do reconciliation. Then, again, the budget for this year was not done. It was deemed so Republicans could again get to reconciliation. I believe reconciliation is being used improperly. We used reconciliation to try to fix healthcare and try to fix the Tax Code.

Our country is at a point where this debt now has to be our No. 1 priority. We have two crises in our country today. One is this debt crisis. The other, I would argue, is the global security crisis. The world hasn't been more dangerous than this in my lifetime, and I believe the two are interrelated.

The last Congress allowed the last administration to disinvest in the military to a point where we are now in jeopardy of being able to defend our country. It is time for action.

In business, if you get into a crisis like this, it is all hands on deck because it is about survival. I would argue that it is about that time here. The problem is that we really haven't talked about the problem in its entirety and what we can still do about it. I want to talk tonight about what is driving this.

When we look at the numbers, it is very clear. We raise about \$2.2 trillion in taxes. That is income taxes on individuals, income taxes on corporations, and other sources of revenue—about \$2.2 trillion. We use the first dollars to pay for mandatory expenses.

We have two types of expenses: mandatory and discretionary. Mandatory expenses are those like your home mortgage, your car payment, your insurance payment, things that get deducted automatically out of your paycheck. We have that. It is called mandatory expenses.

What is mandatory expenses? Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, pension benefits for Federal employees, Federal retirement, veterans' benefits, and so forth. Those are mandatory expenses, and we subsidize those today. Even though there are trust funds, the Social Security and Medicare trust funds are not able to meet the needs of the citizens who are drawing benefits today. We are subsidizing out of that general account almost half a trillion dollars a year. If you include Medicaid and ObamaCare, the healthcare costs, it is almost \$1 trillion, today. Out of the \$2 trillion that we collect in taxes, about 25 percent of it automatically goes to those three line items. Then, about another \$1.7 trillion are then taken out. Debt service is \$316 billion—almost half of what we spend on our military today.

After you take all of that out, there is only about a half trillion dollars left. Yet we still have all of the other discretionary expenses that we fuss about when we do the budget. The budget only deals with discretionary spending. I believe that is one of our problems. What is in discretionary spending? Defense, veterans, and all other domestic discretionary spending.

So it is \$1.2 trillion. Ten years ago, it was \$1.5 trillion. Because of the Budget Control Act and because of sequestration, discretionary expenses have declined in America over the last decade, partly because of the good work of our appropriators and because of the laws that were put in place.

Fundamentally, about half of what we spend this year on discretionary spending, which includes the military, VA, and all the other domestic discretionary spending—that is the State Department, foreign aid, education, health, welfare, the whole bit—comes out of that. Half of it is borrowed money. Over the last decade, 100 percent of what we spent in our discretionary expenses was borrowed money. When we allocated money in this body for hurricane victims—and we all know we want to do that—every dollar we al-

located was borrowed money. We had to go to China or to some other country and hope they are going to buy another issue of our government bonds in order for us to then subsidize our standard of living.

I have been arguing for 5 years that our standard of living is somewhat artificial because of the amount of Federal debt and the amount of household debt in America today.

The other thing I am so distraught about is that this would be fine if it were just this year. But we have a system where we have commitments over the next 30 years that are out of control.

This chart shows discretionary spending historically over the last 18 years, back to 2000. The red line is discretionary spending. The blue line in the last 18 years is mandatory spending. They both went up about the same—mandatory spending, a little more.

But look at what happens from here forward. This is not my number. This is CBO's number. This is CBO on expenses behind mandatory expenses. Again, that is Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, pension and benefits for Federal employees, and healthcare expense obligations of the Federal Government. This is a 20-year schedule. Again, the blue line is mandatory expenses and the red line is discretionary expenses. It goes from about \$2.5 trillion this year on mandatory expenses, and in the 10-year period it goes to over \$8 trillion.

That is in line with what happened just in the last 16 years. In 2000, the size of our government was \$2.4 trillion. The size of our government in 2016, the last year of President Obama, was \$4.2 trillion. So we went from \$2.4 trillion to \$4.2 trillion in that 16-year period of time, one Republican President, one Democratic President.

But this is what we face. You can't tax enough, you can't grow enough, and you can't cut enough. There is no way we can deal with this without failing to meet the obligations that this country has made to its senior citizens and to its people in need for the last 50 years.

What are you going to tell people when you have to tell them that the Social Security trust fund went to zero this year? The Medicare and Social Security trust funds go to zero in 14 years, and there is no answer for that. Today, we subsidize over a half trillion dollars into just Social Security and Medicare out of the taxes we raise. We never intended to do that. It was never supposed to happen. But past generations liberalized those programs to such a degree that the income coming in doesn't cover the outgo of those programs.

My mother is a great example. She lived until she was 93. She passed away last year. She worked for 30 years; she was retired for 30 years. There is no way the math works when that happens.

In the 1930s, when they put Social Security in, it was intended to be a last-resort insurance supplement, not a primary go-to retirement plan. The life expectancy at that time was about 59; this program started at 62. So the math was on their side. Today, life expectancy is in the 80s, and we have a retirement age of 67. So we know the math doesn't work. This cannot happen.

But the good news is there are five areas of work I believe that Congress and the administration need to begin to focus on—and now.

First, I believe our budget process is broken. I have been on the Budget Committee now for 3 years, and I know it doesn't work. It hasn't worked but four times in 44 years to fund the Federal Government. We are supposed to appropriate 12 bills a year; we have averaged 2.5 over the last 44 years.

Let me say that again. In any business, in any enterprise—a medical office, or it doesn't matter—if you were charged to do 12 items and you did 2.5, you would fix something. You would have to fix it, or you would be out of business.

We have used continuing resolutions over 180 times. Actually, Congress has shut the Federal Government down, has not funded the government, 20 times in that 44-year history—20 times. I had no idea that was the case, and I bet most Americans don't either. That is unconscionable.

We don't even deal with every dollar we spend in the budget. We deal only with 25 percent of what we spend. That is the discretionary. That is what we did on the budget here. This is never covered in the budget by law. We don't talk about it. We can no longer do this.

The first thing you have to do is fix the budget process. Second of all, I believe you have to get after redundant agencies and extraneous expenses of the Federal Government. The GAO, the General Accountability Office, thinks we have somewhere around \$700 billion or \$800 billion of wasted spending every year in a \$4 trillion budget. That is about 20 percent. I believe that.

The third thing you have to do is grow the economy. Last year, President Trump said job one is growing the economy. We focused on regulations, energy, and taxes. The economy started growing. In the last 12 months, we have had 3 percent GDP growth. That is 120 basis points above the 1.8 percent we enjoyed for 8 years—the lowest economic performance in our U.S. history.

We believe, with future work on these things, that the economy will continue to grow. We need to work on immigration, trade, and infrastructure to continue this work.

The good news is that the biggest item—the fourth item we need to work on is that we can solve these items; that is, we have to save Social Security and Medicare. When I say “save,” I mean we have to plan for the time and fix it now before the trust fund goes to zero. When the trust fund goes to zero, there is no way benefits can be paid in

full. If we don't do that today, there will be a crisis of a magnitude that I don't want to even imagine if we let this get to that point. That is the fourth one.

The fifth area of work is, we have to get at the spiraling driver of our healthcare costs, not the insurance that we have been fussing about for the last 8 years. We now really need to make a serious, concerted attempt in America to get after the drivers of healthcare costs.

Those are the five areas. I am convinced that when faced with a crisis, Americans are always the best in history at dealing with a crisis. We are not always the first to recognize we are in one.

My role tonight, as it has been for the last 3 years, is to call this crisis out. The CBO has all the numbers. Whether you believe them or not, they are correct. I would argue with their revenue numbers a little bit. Some might argue with their expense numbers. Bottom line, no matter what, you know that with a \$21 trillion debt, the interest expense is going to grow to almost \$1 trillion over the next 10 years.

If we don't do something within this planning period of 10 years, the CBO says that our interest expense alone will go to \$1 trillion. There is no way this can happen.

We have to change the broken system. I think there has been no other time—I think the realization is getting there. The CBO has given us the numbers. The GAO has given us the opportunities and measured some of those opportunities.

I think the political will in this country is now such that they realize we have a debt crisis, and they have more courage, I think, to face it than elected officials do. What drives this town is the next cycle. In the House, it is 2 years; in the Senate, it is 6 years: Oh, my goodness, we can't do anything to hurt that next cycle. We have to have more on our side than they have on their side.

It is time to put that behind us. This cannot be solved with a partisan solution. My good friend from Rhode Island, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and I have cosponsored a bill that goes after and deals with parts of the solution for the budget problem. There is a select committee right now that was formed by the leadership—Democratic and Republican, House and Senate. There are 16 members. I am privileged to be on it. I believe there are things we can do in that select committee to fix our budget process that would help us deal with the additional things we are adding to this debt crisis.

Make no mistake, that will not solve this debt crisis. You will not solve the debt crisis by fixing the budget process alone, but you will not solve the debt crisis unless and until you do fix the budget process. The same thing applies to growing the economy. The same thing is involved with the other items we can look at in terms of redundant

agencies and the healthcare costs in this country.

America has come too far to fail now. We owe it to our kids, our grandkids, and the kids and grandkids of our kids and grandkids to deal with this right now.

I met with Chairman Greenspan last year. I had the privilege to sit with him and talk about this very issue. He reminded me that in 1983, they had a solution. If we had done it in 1983, it wouldn't have been nearly as onerous as it is going to be when we try to fix this.

Again, in the late nineties, Newt Gingrich and Bill Clinton together—two different parties—had an agreement. They got very close to signing it, but then it fell apart because of the political nonsense in this town.

I believe the time has come right now for both sides to put our differences aside, live with an 80-percent solution and deal with this problem right now. If we don't, we will not be able to hand this to our kids. That is the last thing I want to close with. People say: Well, we are leaving our kids and grandkids a problem.

Yes, we are. Look, in this planning period, the next 10 years, when interest rates are higher than what we are spending on national defense, that crisis is right here. It is now. We are going to see it in the next decade, in my opinion. It will make 2008 and 2009 pale in comparison.

I have never seen a time when a crisis would pull us together any more ardently than this one would be right now. The question is, will we recognize that we are in a moment of crisis?

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. 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.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

### SYRIA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the magnitude of atrocities and devastation in Syria caused by ISIS and the Assad regime, with support from Russia and Iran, is appalling. When this calamity began in 2011, I doubt anyone predicted it would come to this: hundreds of