

At the end add the following.
 "This Act shall take effect 3 days after the date of enactment."

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays on my motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2249

Mr. MCCONNELL. I have an amendment to the instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 2249 to the instructions of the motion to refer.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike "3 days" and insert "4 days"

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays on my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2250 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2249

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 2250 to amendment No. 2249.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike "4" and insert "5"

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 670.

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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Jelena McWilliams, of Ohio, to be Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation for a term of five years.

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 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 Jelena McWilliams, of Ohio, to be Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation for a term of five years.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 672.

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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Jelena McWilliams, of Ohio, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation for a term of six years.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam 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 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 Jelena McWilliams, of Ohio, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation for a term of six years.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 618.

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 legislative clerk read the nomination of James Randolph Evans, of Georgia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Luxembourg.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam 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 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 James Randolph Evans, of Georgia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Luxembourg.

Thom Tillis, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, John Thune, Roy Blunt, Ron Johnson, Cory Gardner, Lindsey Graham, Pat Roberts, Johnny Isakson, John Boozman, James E. Risch, Todd Young, John Hoeven, Mike Rounds, David Perdue.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

VETERANS CEMETERY BENEFIT CORRECTION ACT—Continued

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls with respect to the cloture motions filed in executive session today be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Indiana.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam President, as we observe National Police Week, I rise today to honor our fallen law enforcement officers and to discuss some of the ways we are working to make it safer for officers to do their jobs and protect our communities.

Together, we honor and remember the lives of the law enforcement officers we have lost in the line of duty. These men and women put their lives on the line to protect our neighborhoods so that a Hoosier senior can safely sit on his porch and watch his grandkids play in the front yard or to ensure that working families can go to and from their jobs in peace. They are on the frontlines battling the devastating opioid epidemic that has plagued our State. Our police are the ones who work with our communities and local leaders to help stem violence and to help fight crime in our neighborhoods. They are the ones putting themselves in harm's way every single day.

These officers are heroes. To their families, they are even more. They are moms and dads, sisters and brothers, wives and husbands, and their families pray that they come home safely at the end of every shift. Sadly, as we know, that doesn't happen every time.

When we lose an officer, that loss is felt deeply, particularly by their family and those who know them and love them. It is a grief that is also shared throughout the entire law enforcement community and throughout our State.

Since I began serving in the U.S. Senate in 2013, the Hoosier State has lost nine officers in the line of duty. I want to take a moment to pay tribute to these fallen heroes.

In September of 2013, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department officer Rod Bradway was shot and killed while responding to a domestic dispute call in a northwest Indianapolis apartment complex. A veteran officer, he had served with the Wayne Township Fire Department for 10 years before working for 5 years on the IMPD force. Officer Bradway is credited with saving the life of a domestic dispute victim and her baby before losing his life protecting them.

In June 2014, Tipton County deputy sheriff Jacob Calvin was killed in a car crash while responding to an accident. Deputy Calvin served his community and our country in more ways than one. He was with the department for 2½ years and had previously served his country in Iraq in the U.S. Air Force and volunteered at the Kempton Fire Department as a firefighter and EMT.

In July 2014, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department officer Perry Renn was responding to reports of gunfire when he was shot and killed. Officer Renn served more than two decades in the force. He was a two-time recipient of the IMPD's Medal of Bravery Award, and he was awarded the Medal of Honor and Purple Heart posthumously. Officer Renn was also a U.S. Army veteran.

Also, in July of 2014, Patrolman Jeffrey Westerfield of the Gary Police Department was found fatally shot while on duty in his patrol car. He was killed on his 47th birthday. Patrolman Westerfield had served the Gary Police Department for 19 years and, prior to that, in the U.S. Army.

In September of 2014, Merrillville Police Department patrolman Nickolaus Schultz was shot when investigating reports concerning an evicted tenant. Patrolman Schultz passed away 2 days later due to his wounds. Patrolman Schultz was only 24 years old and had been on the Merrillville police force for 13 months.

In March of 2016, we lost Howard County sheriff's deputy Carl Koontz, who was shot and killed while serving arrest and search warrants in Russiaville in connection with a narcotics case. Deputy Koontz was just 26 years old. He had served more than 2 years with the Howard County Sheriff's Department.

In July of 2017, Lieutenant Aaron Allen of the Southport Police Department was shot while responding to a crash involving an overturned vehicle. Hours before he was killed—and there is a picture of this which tears your heart out—he walked his 5-year-old son to the bus for his first day of kindergarten. He was a 6-year veteran with the Southport Police Department and had previously been named the Officer of the Year for saving two Hoosiers' lives. He also previously served in the U.S. Air Force.

Tragically, this year we have lost two Hoosier police officers in the line of duty. Boone County deputy sheriff Jacob Pickett was shot and killed in March during a vehicle pursuit in Lebanon, IN. As the suspect fled on foot, Deputy Pickett and Brick, his K-9 partner, followed in pursuit. Deputy Pickett was shot as he rounded the corner of a building. He served with the Boone County Sheriff's Office for 3 years and previously with the Tipton County Sheriff's Office and the Marion County Sheriff's Office.

Earlier this month, just a few weeks ago, Terra Haute police officer Rob Pitts was shot and killed while investigating a homicide. As Officer Pitts and other detectives approached the suspect's apartment, the suspect opened fire, fatally injuring Officer Pitts. Officer Pitts had served with the department for 16 years and with the Sullivan Police Department for 6 years prior to that.

These nine brave officers embodied values that should make their loved ones, their fellow officers, and every Hoosier incredibly proud. We remember their sacrifice and their courageous service, and we are thinking of their families, not only today, not only this week, but year round.

As we pay our respects to those we have lost, we also have a solemn duty to support the family members of those officers who never had the chance to return home. We also must work to ensure that our officers and law enforcement agencies have the resources needed to do their jobs and keep our communities safe. Over the last few years, I have been honored to introduce and to get signed into law bipartisan legislation to help support law enforcement agencies and officers and to help with

grant efforts to provide our officers with necessary tools.

When officers and first responders are killed in the line of duty, they often leave behind beloved families, including school-age children. These families and children endure grief and trauma that we can't even begin to imagine. We must do all we can to help the families of our fallen officers and first responders, and this includes ensuring that their children get a good education. That is why I helped to introduce the bipartisan Children of Fallen Heroes Scholarship Act. This allows the children of fallen first responders who pursue a college education to have access to the maximum level of Federal Pell grants authorized by law.

I was pleased to support the government funding bill that passed in March, which included a provision based on the Children of Fallen Heroes Scholarship Act.

Another critically important area we must continue to focus on is helping to equip officers with lifesaving equipment. It is no secret that our officers may face dangerous situations at any moment as they respond to calls and do their job. That is why I supported the bipartisan Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program Reauthorization Act. It was signed into law in May of 2016. It helps law enforcement agencies purchase bulletproof vests. Having those vests can prevent injuries for our law enforcement officers and can save lives.

We experienced this firsthand in 2014, when IMPD officer Greg Milburn was shot in the line of duty. He credits his vest with his survival. In the past 3 years, police departments across Indiana have received a total of more than \$1 million to help purchase bulletproof vests for officers so they can all go home at the end of their shift every day.

Another essential role law enforcement officers play is working with our community leaders, elected leaders, and law enforcement agencies to tackle persistent crime and to improve neighborhood safety. I, along with many of my colleagues, have long supported robust funding for the Byrne Memorial JAG Program. This supports State and local law enforcement agencies in their efforts to address the specific public safety and criminal justice challenges facing our communities. This program also supports information sharing on terror and criminal threats, drug and human trafficking organizations, and sexual predators.

Lastly, as officers go to work every day, they can encounter horrific scenes and experience traumatic situations that are just impossible to leave behind once the day is done. Last year, I authored and introduced the bipartisan Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act with my friend and colleague from Indiana, Senator TODD YOUNG. Our bill was signed into law by President Trump in January. It helps law enforcement agencies enhance or

establish mental health services for officers. It provides tools to help officers deal with mental health challenges and to combat the stigma associated with addressing those issues. This legislation also includes funding that the Department of Justice can use to initiate peer-mentoring pilot program grants for local law enforcement agencies.

Our law enforcement officers deserve our support. They deserve it to ensure they can do their job safely and effectively. I will continue to work on bipartisan efforts to help our officers and their families.

In the meantime, this National Police Week—this special week we have here every year—let's take a moment to pray for those fallen heroes, for their families, and for their fellow officers. They own our hearts for all they do for us. They protect our families, our children, and our communities, and they put their lives on the line every day for us, not knowing if they are going to come home safely or not. But still they go forward. Still they go out. Still our officers who are our friends and who protect us keep us safe every day.

They earned and have always kept all of our respect and of everyone in our communities. They have our love. They have our devotion and our deepest appreciation for everything they do every day.

May God bless all of these officers. May God bless Indiana, and may God bless the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

MCCAIN MISSION ACT

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, many of us this afternoon had the opportunity to see a screening of the HBO documentary "For Whom the Bell Tolls," a tribute to Senator McCain. It is clearly a tribute, but it is also the story of his life and an expose of his sacrifice for his country. It is a moving story of Senator McCain's life and an inspiration to me and, I assume, to my colleagues for the commitment that he has made to always try to do right—putting his country above self.

I have had the honor of working with Senator McCain for the last several years in regard to legislation trying to improve the circumstances that our Nation's veterans face as they access healthcare within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Senator McCain and I introduced legislation to accomplish a number of things related to this, particularly the Veterans Choice Program. Choice was passed back about 2014, at a time in which the VA was in a crisis and a time in which the veterans they were created to serve were harmed by decisions made at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The problems were highlighted in Senator McCain's home city of Phoenix at the Phoenix VA, in which a number of veterans may have died as a result of the inability to access healthcare in a timely fashion.

The solution to the problems exhibited in other places across the country—which included false waiting lists, in which the VA had determined a list that was not real but demonstrated that veterans who had no idea they had an appointment to see someone at the VA had an appointment, to camouflage the failures and the slowness of the Department of Veterans Affairs—resulted in a unanimous decision by the Senate to create a program called Choice.

Choice creates the opportunity for a veteran, under certain circumstances, to access healthcare in their home community at the veteran's discretion. This program, in my view, has significant potential to alter the opportunities that a veteran has to be cared for.

Those who served our country deserve the very best, and we want to make certain that happens both inside the VA and with a program that allows veterans to choose healthcare outside the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Veterans Choice Program has expired since 2014. We have reauthorized it in a number of instances. I think three, perhaps four times. It needed funding, and we reauthorized the funding. Choice was a limited program in which for the veteran to qualify to receive Choice care in the community at their discretion and at their option was determined by whether or not that veteran lived within 40 miles of a VA facility or whether the VA could provide the services within 30 days of the time the veteran needed that care.

The committee here in the Senate has worked for a long time trying to reauthorize the Veterans Choice Program. It has been my position, with Senator McCain, that just to reauthorize Choice would be a significant error on our part and that in the authorization process, we should make community care work better for veterans.

I judge whether or not the VA is providing the care and services that our veterans need by what you would call casework—what we do on behalf of our constituents who have a challenge or a problem with a Federal agency or department. Our casework regarding veterans who are attempting to access care in the community has been exponential.

I checked the other day. At the moment, we have 80 cases for veterans in Kansas—not all related to this particular program but 80 veterans who contacted me and my staff and said: I need your help. Since I have been a Senator, that number is 2,650 veterans who have contacted me or my staff saying: I need your help. So when it came time for the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee to begin the legislative process of determining how to alter the program, how to reform it, and, particularly, how to extend the program, I wanted to make certain that my input was based upon what veterans were telling me about how the program did and didn't work.

Our committee passed a bill out of the Veterans' Affairs Committee

months ago. That bill was passed by our committee on a vote of 14 to 1. I was the one opponent. I say that for my colleagues today—some of whom have asked my view, some of whom I hope were interested in my view, and even those who may not care. I want them to know that the bill now in front of the Senate—and the majority leader just filed the proceedings for us to have a cloture vote next week on this legislation—is legislation I support. It does do something more than just extend Choice. It creates opportunities for that program to work much better. Most importantly to me was the issue of who decides whether or not a veteran has the option of choosing community care.

The legislation that we will consider next week allows for the Department of Veterans Affairs—in a sense, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs—to remain the gatekeeper. The VA has the opportunity to make the decision about who gets to have community care, but different than today, when the only criteria is 40 miles or 30 days. We create access standards in this legislation that the VA must abide by in determining whether or not a veteran can have care in the community, and that is a significant difference.

We had all kinds of challenges with the 40 miles and 30 days. We changed the definition of what a facility was in order to get the VA to allow individuals to have access to care at home. People may recall that the VA wanted to count the 40 miles as the crow flies. In addition to other challenges that the VA put in front of veterans, we have eliminated those and created a standard by which the VA must abide. So while the gatekeeper remains the Department of Veterans Affairs, it is not in the total discretion of the Department of Veterans Affairs. They must abide by criteria, and if the veteran believes he or she is denied care in the community, that veteran has the opportunity to appeal based upon a number of standards, including best medical interest of the veteran.

We are changing a program in which the VA made decisions that often denied veterans the access to care in their community that veteran asked for, and we are saying: You now asked the VA for permission. The VA has to make a decision to grant or deny that permission, but they can't do it solely at the discretion of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. They must abide by criteria. That is a significant improvement.

Secondly, if you feel like you have received the wrong decision, you can appeal that decision.

Today—and we have plenty of examples of this in Kansas—when a veteran is denied community care by the Department of Veterans Affairs, their only appeal is to their Senator or their Member of Congress, in which we then have a new case to once again try to work our way through the Department

of Veterans Affairs: Why did you deny this veteran his or her choice to have community care?

This bill is a significant improvement. It satisfies the concerns I had; my view that early on, we were mostly just trying to extend Choice as it was—as it is, and now this replaces it with really a circumstance in which veterans have rights, have standards the Department of Veterans Affairs must comply with.

In addition to the issues of who can access care, who is the gatekeeper, and determining the standards, this bill merges and modernizes all community care programs and puts them all in one category at the Department of Veterans Affairs instead of multiple programs. It simplifies it.

We have had too many instances in which, if you didn't access care under one program, you might be able to apply for another. This changes the circumstances that so many of my veterans have complained to me about, in which they get an authorization from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and they are allowed to see a physician in their home community, but then when they need lab work or an x ray—something that should be related to that visit—they have to go back to the Department of Veterans Affairs to get additional consent. This is more in the line of necessary procedures that should follow: one authorization that includes the things that are medically necessary for that appointment with the physician or that admission to a hospital. It just makes sense that these other things would be necessary if that physician whom the VA referred you to believes them to be necessary. It establishes a framework for the VA to build a high-performing healthcare network, and it implements new coordination so the veteran and the VA work together to determine what is in the best interest of that veteran.

It is something I have cared about a lot. We required that in the original Choice Act; that the healthcare provider be paid Medicare rates. Those of us who come from rural States recognize there are various rates under Medicare, and for our smallest hospitals, they are entitled to cost-based reimbursement. That is not happening under the current legislation, the law today. This legislation corrects the problem, keeping the circumstance more likely in which our hospitals and doctors would be financially able to see a veteran and provide that care.

This is not privatizing the VA. The VA serves a valuable and useful role. Many veterans choose to have care at the Department of Veterans Affairs, at their hospitals, and at their clinics. Again, it is the veterans' choice where he or she wants to go.

For those of us who come from rural places, the distances in which a veteran must travel, in many instances, have eliminated the ability for that veteran to ever access care from the VA. The VA has programs that are im-

portant to veterans—traumatic brain injury, amputation, things that may not ever be as available or as desirable in the community.

This legislation is supported by every veterans service organization I know of. We have come to the point in which it is time for us to pass this legislation. Memorial Day is approaching. The President has asked this legislation be approved prior to Memorial Day. We think it is appropriate to honor those who served our country at this point in May, where Memorial Day is around the corner, to provide the care they are asking for.

The other aspect of why it is important for us to move on the legislation now is that the funding for Choice and community care has diminished. I serve on the Appropriations Committee that funds the Department of Veterans Affairs, and it is necessary for us to get the money in place. The VA is already rationing care for those veterans who use Choice today, and this legislation puts the necessary dollars in place for Choice to continue in its new reformed and improved status.

It would be a shame for us to miss this opportunity. It would be wrong for our veterans. It would diminish the number of people who access care at the Department of Veterans Affairs and do so at a time in which the needs are great for those who have served our Nation.

Again, referring to my colleague from Arizona, Senator MCCAIN, we would honor him if we answer this call to do our duty to see that our veterans are cared for, that promises are kept.

I appreciate the response that was given when the bill was suggested to be named in honor of Senator MCCAIN. Both the House chairman and the House committee, along with Senator ISAKSON, the chairman here, and Senator TESTER, the ranking member, have agreed to do that. This legislation is now known as the McCain Mission Act. Our colleague, for whom there are so many reasons to pay honor and tribute to, would receive another honor for his service to our Nation but of equal importance, his service to other veterans.

For so many reasons, it is time for us to act, to pass the McCain Mission Act, and do so with the promptness that has followed long deliberations to try to get it right.

In my view, too often the U.S. Senate, the Congress, politics, and government, in general, just put a bandaid on to get by. This legislation is significantly different than doing something to get by. It would improve the quality of life for those who serve our Nation. We should honor them, as we honor Senator MCCAIN, prior to Memorial Day, at the end of next week.

I thank you for the opportunity to address the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I want to first commend my colleague

from Kansas for his passion for our veterans and for his hard work on legislation that is really going to help in Ohio and around the country to ensure they have the care they deserve and also for his mention of Senator MCCAIN, who is a true national hero. He now has a documentary about him on HBO, as some of us saw earlier today. It will soon be available for everyone to see. It is very powerful.

STOP ACT

Madam President, we heard earlier from one of my colleagues from Indiana who talked about the fact that this is National Police Week. A number of us have come to the floor to talk about our incredible men and women in uniform back home who protect us every day through their dedication, their public service, and it is appropriate to commend them.

I will say, as I have talked to police officers from Ohio this week, one issue came up again and again that doesn't get the attention it deserves; that is, the influx of synthetic opioids, like fentanyl, and the effect it is having on our law enforcement community, our first responders, in general, and, for that matter, all of our citizens. What they told me is, this is the issue that is creating so much crime in our communities. This is the issue that is filling our courtrooms and our jails.

One police officer I met with this week is a corrections officer at a jail in one of our urban areas in Ohio. I asked him to just give me an estimate. What percentage of the inmates in this jail are there because of the drug crisis and specifically the opioid issue?

He thought for a minute, and he said: Probably 90 percent—90 percent. Some are there because of selling drugs, some of them are there, though, because they have committed a crime while they were trying to get the money to be able to pay for their habit—so it is shoplifting; it is fraud; it is burglary. This issue is now everywhere.

The last year for which we have good information would be 2016. We have a lot of information nationally on that, and 2016 was the worst year on record in terms of overdose deaths attributable to these synthetic drugs coming into our country. Guess what. Almost certainly, 2017 is worse.

As one example, the coroner for Franklin County, OH—that is the Columbus area in Ohio, our fastest growing city—recently released their 2017 overdose report for the county. Franklin County had 520 overdose deaths in 2017. That is a 47-percent increase from 2016. So 2016 was the worst year on record; 2017, almost a 50-percent increase in overdose deaths. By the way, sadly, those overdose deaths are on track again this year to reach a record.

Two-thirds of those overdose deaths in Columbus, OH, Franklin County, involve fentanyl, which is this synthetic opioid that is overtaking our communities in Ohio. Think about that. Two-thirds of those overdose deaths last year in Columbus, OH, were due to fentanyl.

Just last week, a Cleveland man was sentenced to more than 11 years in Federal prison for selling fentanyl that resulted in a 46-year-old Ohio man's death. Earlier this month, a man in Lorain, OH, was convicted of selling fentanyl, resulting in a 23-year-old's death.

This drug and the opioid crisis knows no bounds. It is in every age group. It is in every ZIP Code. It is everywhere.

Unbelievably, this fentanyl drug—a synthetic form of heroin, a synthetic form of opioids—we are told by the experts is coming into our country through the U.S. mail system. This is shocking to me, and it should be something we can do something about. This is a Federal agency, after all.

Unlike other drugs—let's say heroin or even crystal meth, which tend to come over land, mostly from Mexico—this drug primarily is coming through the U.S. mail system from one country primarily—China. It is coming from laboratories in China, where some evil scientist is mixing this deadly brew and then sending it through the U.S. mail into our communities. It is being shipped directly into your community in small packages. These are the deadliest drugs we have ever experienced, and they are being shipped directly through a Federal agency.

What is fentanyl? It is 50 times more powerful than heroin. It is inexpensive. It is readily available now in many communities. It is the new scourge, killing more people in my State of Ohio last year than any other drug. We need to do all we can to stop more of these poisons from entering our communities. At the very least, if we can't stop it all, let's raise the price because the cost of this drug, being so inexpensive and it being so powerful, is one of the things that is driving these overdoses and these deaths.

It is not just overdoses. It is people whose lives are getting off track, families breaking apart, community dysfunction, people leaving work. It is the babies who are being born with this neonatal absence syndrome, so they have to go through withdrawal as little babies whom you can hold in your two hands. It is affecting our communities in so many ways.

There is a new study out showing that of the men who are out of the workforce altogether—probably 8½ million men—roughly half of them are taking pain medication on a daily basis. When pushed, two-thirds say it is prescriptions. What does that mean? This means it is affecting one of the big issues we are all hearing about back home, which is lack of a workforce. Well, here you have millions of Americans who are off track because of this issue. So, yes, it is tragic and unbelievable that over 60,000 Americans a year are dying from overdoses, but it is even worse than that. That is the tip of the iceberg, in a way. There are so many other aspects of this that are affecting the communities we represent in the Chamber.

With regard to fentanyl, this new scourge, we conducted an 18-month investigation in the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which I chair. We did this because we are hearing more and more about fentanyl. We wanted to look into how fentanyl is being shipped into the United States and what can be done at the Federal level to stop it. The investigation revealed just how easy it is to purchase fentanyl online and have it shipped to the United States. It is so easy, in fact, we found that most of the overseas providers essentially guaranteed delivery if you use the U.S. mail system.

Through a simple Google search, our staff found hundreds of websites, many affiliated with Chinese labs openly advertising fentanyl for sale.

We went undercover, using an investigator from the Department of Homeland Security to help us find some of these websites. We found that in several cases—seven different cases—individuals who receive fentanyl through some of these websites had died from an overdose shortly after receiving their fentanyl. We were able to find that the sellers would tell you to ship the drugs through the Postal Service, not a private carrier like FedEx or DHL or UPS or any other private carrier. As we have learned in our investigation, this is because the Postal Service, unlike these private carriers, is not required to have what is called advanced electronic data as part of the package. In other words, law enforcement is not given information on these packages.

The data that is in this advance electronic information is the name and address of the sender, the name and address of the person who is receiving the package, and what the contents of the package are. How does this help? Well, this gives law enforcement the ability to use big data to find out what region it is coming from—again, if there is a region in China that is sending a lot of this poison, they will know that; where it is going; if it is going to a particular post office box where they have reason to believe that it might be suspect, or perhaps it is going to an abandoned warehouse.

The information about what is in the package obviously is very interesting to Customs and Border Protection. They need this help. Why? Because they can't otherwise identify suspicious packages. There are 900 million packages a year now coming into the United States through the mail system—900 million packages. It is like finding a needle in a haystack.

Yes, we need better detection equipment, and we have actually passed legislation recently do to that. We have additional legislation to be able to hire more individuals to help detect whether these packages have opioids contained within them. But this advance information that you can have on the package is so incredibly important, and it is the reason the traffickers are saying: Don't send it through a private

carrier; send it through our own government agency because we think we can guarantee delivery there. It is a glaring loophole in our screening process, and it is a national security threat. It is a clear example of where Congress ought to come together on a bipartisan basis and enact Federal policies to fix this flaw.

Shortly after the tragic events of 9/11—September 11, 2001—Congress did pass a law in this regard, and the law did require all private carriers to obtain advance electronic data on all international packages entering the United States and did require them to share that data with law enforcement. The concern was not just contraband or opioids; it was also explosives. They passed that legislation here in Congress because they knew it was important to have law enforcement get that information.

With regard to the post office, they made it optional. Congress required the Postmaster General and the Secretary of the Treasury to determine whether the post office should also collect such data. This was 17 years ago. That determination was never made. They did not follow the law. From one administration to the next, to the next, to the next, there was no determination, which, of course, has resulted in no data requirements for the Postal Service. Again, that was in 2002.

For about 14 years, the Postal Service sat by and did nothing on this issue, knowing that this was a loophole, that this was an opening in the law for traffickers and others to be able to send things into our country. To me, that is unacceptable.

In the last couple of years, after pressure from Congress and, frankly, our investigation that I talked about earlier and the hearings we held talking about this issue in the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, the Postal Service did actually start to do what, in my view, they should have done starting 16 years ago, but unfortunately what they are doing is not nearly enough. They have begun getting some data on some international packages, but the efforts are inadequate. One hundred percent of private carriers' packages have to have it, and do, and they provide it to law enforcement.

The U.S. Postal Service last year began an effort to get more of this advance electronic data, but they received it, based on testimony they provided to us, on only about 36 percent of the international packages. This means that the United States received more than 318 million packages last year that had no screening on them, no information for law enforcement to be able to identify the package.

We also found that the quality of the data that was provided by the Postal Service was inadequate in many cases and therefore not helpful to law enforcement. That is again based on testimony before our committee.

Even when the Postal Service conducted a pilot program to screen for

drugs, they only presented 80 percent of the packages targeted by Customs and Border Protection for inspection. So even when they did have information on it and law enforcement said “I want that package”—again, using big data in figuring out what might be a suspicious package—only 80 percent of them were even delivered to law enforcement out of the 36 percent that had electronic data. So the other 20 percent of those suspicious packages were allowed to go into circulation, into our communities, without having any screening.

Frankly, it has been a challenge to get the post office to address this problem on their own. We are talking about 900 million packages a year. And they have funding problems. I get that. But, folks, this is a crisis. It is a true epidemic. It is the No. 1 killer in my State.

It is time for Congress to act. People are dying every day because of these synthetic drugs. How many more of our people have to die before our own Postal Service takes the measures that we know can be taken to stop these poisons?

The STOP Act is a bipartisan bill I introduced with Senator AMY KLOBUCHAR, a Democrat from Minnesota, that will close this loophole and therefore help stop these deadly drugs from entering our communities. Senator KLOBUCHAR was on the floor earlier this afternoon and wanted to speak at this time about the legislation. She had to catch a plane to get back to her home State of Minnesota, but I appreciate her partnership on this issue and her promotion of our dealing with this issue here on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

The STOP Act is very simple, and it is common sense. It is going to hold the U.S. Postal Service to the same standard as these private mail carriers that we talked about and require that they get advance electronic data not on 36 percent but on 100 percent of packages entering the United States—and good data—and then present that to law enforcement.

We are not punishing the Postal Service or forcing them to jump through unnecessary hoops. We are simply saying that, given the crisis we face, the U.S. Postal Service, a Federal agency, should require the same types of advance electronic data from foreign countries that private mail carriers do, and we give the Postal Service a year to do it.

By the way, when I talked to mail carriers about this issue, when I talked to postal inspectors about this issue, certainly when I talked to Customs and Border Protection individuals about this issue, they all agreed. Who wouldn't? They have families too. They understand. This issue needs to be addressed, and it needs to be addressed urgently.

The United States of America provides this advance electronic data on 90 percent of our packages that we send

to other countries, so we are not asking for something that we are not doing. It makes sense all around the world. It makes sense here, and it will help save lives.

Thirty-three of my Senate colleagues—20 Republicans, 12 Democrats, and 1 Independent—have signed on as cosponsors of this legislation. The Presiding Officer today, who is from West Virginia—her State has been getting hit really hard like Ohio. She has a passion for this issue. She knows that we need to do all we can do to stop this poison from coming in.

The legislation has the support of a broad cross-section of this body. It has also been endorsed by President Trump's opioid commission. This is a commission that he formed to look at answers, and this is one of their specific recommendations: The STOP Act—pass it.

Just this week, the Secretary of Homeland Security, Kirstjen Nielsen, reaffirmed her support for this measure.

The House companion bill has 271 cosponsors—more than half of the U.S. House of Representatives.

By the way, asking every country for this kind of information, this advance electronic data, is not just common sense, it is also reasonable. The United States provides that data on nearly all of our packages that go into China, as an example, so why shouldn't China do that for us? At least one country—Sweden—recently returned packages from China that did not comply with Swedish postal rules on providing this information. So the Postal Service's argument that they have to accept and deliver packages from foreign posts under treaty obligations is simply not the case. If a country doesn't play by our rules, we can simply choose to return their packages. By the way, threatening to do so is all we need to do because these countries then will comply. We have the largest market in the world. We are the biggest economy in the world. We just have to insist on it.

China is already starting to recognize the importance of providing this data for access to U.S. markets. For example, as of early this year, when we published our report from the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, we had information that China had already provided electronic data on roughly 50 percent of the packages headed to the United States. So this notion that somehow China can't do it—of course they can.

Yesterday, instead of marking up this bipartisan STOP Act I talked about, the STOP Act legislation, the House Ways and Means Committee considered a weaker alternative to our bill. Apparently, they were hearing from some at the Postal Service who don't want Congress to require them to get this electronic data within 1 year, which we think is not just doable but reasonable. They don't want Congress to put in place penalties if they don't get that data, and our legislation, yes, has penalties.

The Postal Service doesn't mind if Congress simply recommends that they get the data, but remember, Congress recommended that way back in 2002. That was 16 years ago. And until very recently, just the last couple of years, the Postal Service did nothing to provide that crucial information.

Unfortunately, the weaker alternative approved by the committee yesterday would eliminate the real, enforceable, and immediate requirement that the Postal Service provide law enforcement with the information they need to identify and stop the shipment of deadly synthetic drugs into our communities.

In particular, the STOP Act requires that within 1 year, the Postal Service secure advance electronic data on 100 percent of packages here in the United States and transmit that data to law enforcement, to Customs and Border Protection. The version reported out yesterday gives the Postal Service 4 years—4 years. Remember the No. 1 killer in my State and in many States. Last year, there was an increase from the year before, and this year looks worse again. We can't wait 4 years. We don't have to.

The version they reported out also requires only 95 percent of the packages to have that data.

In addition, this alternative to the STOP Act that was reported out yesterday actually gives the Federal Government the authority to waive the requirements in the STOP Act that would get advance electronic data if it is in the “national security interest of the United States.” They can waive it altogether. I am struggling to think of a time when knowing less about what is coming into our country is in our national security interest.

As the permanent subcommittee investigation's report from January makes clear, there are hundreds of millions of packages coming into this country through the Postal Service every year with little or no screening at all. That is frightening. This loophole is allowing drug traffickers to exploit our own Federal Government, and we can't allow this status quo to continue.

The organization Americans for Securing All Packages—ASAP—issued a statement last week urging the Ways and Means Committee to “reject this weakened alternative, and pass the STOP Act, a bill with 271 bipartisan cosponsors.”

Just yesterday, Shatterproof—another addiction advocacy group fighting against the opioid addiction issue—issued a similar statement calling on Congress to pass the STOP Act, not the watered-down version.

I want to say today on the floor that I very much appreciate the fact that Ways and Means Committee Chairman KEVIN BRADY has acknowledged these concerns and has committed to working with us to resolve these differences during the legislative process. I know him. I know he is a passionate advocate of addressing this issue. He wants

to reverse the opioid epidemic, and he wants this to work, so I look forward to working with him.

I particularly appreciate the House coauthors of the STOP Act, including Representatives MIKE BISHOP and BILL PASCRELL. I talked to Mr. BISHOP today, and I know his passion to deal with this issue as well.

The coalition of support for the STOP Act, by the way, also includes the Fraternal Order of Police. I talked about the fact that police officers understand the dangers of this. By the way, to give an example of how dangerous this is to them, it is not just the overcrowding of our prison system and the courts and the crime that is being committed, it is a personal danger to them as law enforcement officers.

In East Liverpool, OH, a police officer pulled over two men for a traffic violation, and he noticed there was a powdery substance in the car. Being alert, he put on his mask and his gloves and arrested those two gentlemen because the powdery substance was fentanyl. They had stupidly tried to spread it around the car. He took them down to the station and booked them.

After he booked them, he was talking to his fellow officers, and he looked down on his shirt and noticed a few white flecks. So, as anyone would do, he took his hand and flicked the pieces of something white off of his shoulder. It was fentanyl. That exposure to his fingers caused him to drop, unconscious, on the floor. This is a big guy, 6 feet 2 inches, over 200 pounds, and in good shape. He overdosed and nearly died.

As his police chief said, if we had not been there to apply Narcan—not once, twice, or three times but five and six times, having taken him to the emergency room—if we hadn't been there, he didn't think he would have made it. Think if he would have gone home to hug his kid without brushing those flecks off his shoulder.

Our police officers are subject to this all the time, as are other first responders. It is appropriate that police organizations around the country are strongly in support of the STOP Act. So are the National Association of State EMS Officials, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and anti-opioid groups like Shatterproof, which I talked about, but also groups like SAFE, or Stop Addiction Fatality Epidemic, and other groups which have said: This is crazy; we have to stop this stuff from coming into our communities and, again, at a minimum, get the price up, because part of the reason it is spreading so much is that it is not just deadly and powerful, but it is inexpensive.

There is a strong bipartisan consensus that this bill, the Senate STOP Act, is absolutely needed to help combat the wave of opioid addiction and overdose deaths on the front end, by keeping some of these more deadly drugs from ever entering our communities in the first place.

This is a step we can take in the Senate to make accessing these deadly and inexpensive synthetic drugs more difficult.

The STOP Act will make life a little easier for the people of Ohio and across the country who are increasingly fatally overdosing or being unknowingly exposed to these deadly drugs.

Of course, this is only one part of combating the opioid epidemic. We understand that. We passed legislation here, which I coauthored, that increases treatment options, does more in terms of prevention, provides longer term recovery, and helps to provide our police officers and other first responders with the Narcan that is needed to reverse the effects of overdoses.

But, to my colleagues, this one is common sense. Stopping more of these deadly drugs from ever entering the country in the first place and raising the price of these drugs will make a difference and will save lives.

Let's pass this legislation. Let's work with the House to be sure it is legislation that will be effective immediately to be able to stop the increasing danger these opioids are causing in our communities all around the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUNT). The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to executive session for consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 593. I ask consent that there be 4 hours of debate, equally divided in the usual form, and that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

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

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant informa-

tion is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Arlington, VA.

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

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 17-37, concerning the Air Force's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of Bahrain for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$45 million. After this letter is delivered to your office, we plan to issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale.

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

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 17-37

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

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of Bahrain

(ii) Total Estimated Value:
Major Defense Equipment * \$38 million.
Other \$7 million.
Total \$45 million.

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

Major Defense Equipment (MDE):
One thousand five hundred (1,500) MK-82 (500lbs) General Purpose (GP) Bomb Bodies.
Six hundred (600) MK-83 (1,000lbs) GP Bomb Bodies.

Six hundred (600) MK-84 (2,000lbs) GP Bomb Bodies.

Five hundred (500) BLU-109 (2,000lbs) Penetrator Warhead Bomb Bodies.

Non-MDE includes: Also included are spares, and repair parts, support equipment, personnel training and training equipment, shipping and logistics services, publications and technical documentation, U.S. Government and contractor technical support services, containers, munitions components, test equipment, and other related elements of logistics and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Air Force (X7-D-AAN).

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

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

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: None.

(viii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: May 17, 2018.

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

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Government of Bahrain—Munitions

The Government of Bahrain has requested three thousand two hundred (3,200) General Purpose (GP) and Penetrator Warhead bomb bodies to include: one thousand five hundred (1,500) MK-82 (500lbs) GP bomb bodies, six hundred (600) MK-83 (1,000lbs) GP bomb bodies, six hundred (600) MK-84 (2,000lbs) GP