

from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 84, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 116 Ex.]

YEAS—84

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

NAYS—11

Gillibrand	Menendez	Stabenow
Harris	Merkley	Warren
Hirono	Peters	Wyden
Markey	Sanders	

NOT VOTING—5

Coons	Heinrich	McCain
Duckworth	Isakson	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 84, the nays are 11.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Annemarie Carney Axon, of Alabama, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Alabama.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending question is the Axon nomination postcloture.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I see nobody else seeking the floor. I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

FORCED FAMILY SEPARATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for those of us who read history, we know that throughout history, including at times in our own country many years ago,

the forcible separation of families was used as an instrument of terror.

I struggle to imagine a more damaging and inhumane governmental policy than to forcibly and needlessly tear children away from their parents. For decades, the United States has rightly led the world in condemning such practices as flagrant abuses of government power and human rights.

Yet, today, in an extraordinary breach of our most basic values, the Trump administration is now regularly employing these very tactics. It is true that some children were separated from their parents during the previous administration. I vocally and forcefully opposed it then, because I believed and I am still convinced that there are alternatives that are far more humane and effective than the tearing apart of families.

But the family separation we are seeing today is so vastly different both in purpose and in scope than what occurred during the Obama administration. There is no comparison. Separation is no longer limited to narrow circumstances where it is arguably in the best interest of the child. Separating children, even infants, from their parents is now being carried out as a blanket policy. It is frightening. This disturbing policy is happening by design.

The Trump administration's decision to criminally prosecute every adult who arrives at our border without documentation establishes a de facto family separation policy that is going to rip thousands of innocent children away from their loved ones. The administration's claim that this policy is necessary to deter illegal border crossings rings hollow. The administration has also separated families who follow the rules and lawfully present themselves at ports of entry with claims of asylum. They are asking for asylum.

There is simply no way we can sanitize the cruelty of this policy. The anguish we are inflicting is evident in the story of each parent who is losing a child. Let me tell my colleagues a couple of those stories.

Here are the words of Maria, who was separated from her children, ages 7 and 2, just last month when she sought asylum at the San Ysidro Port of Entry.

She said:

[A]t about 8 a.m. they called just my two children and I went out and they said, "Miss, only they are going." . . . [T]he officer said, "They are here for them. Can the little one walk?"

"Yes," I told the officer.

"Let him down," they told me.

The older one took his hand and they started to walk. Then they turned around to look and when they saw that I was not going after them, they cried.

I will tell another story, the ordeal of another mother with two sons, age 4 and 10. She is seeking asylum from El Salvador.

I was only given five minutes to say goodbye before [my sons] were torn from me. My babies started crying when they found out we were going to be separated. It breaks my heart to remember my youngest wail, "Why

do I have to leave?" . . . My youngest cried and screamed in protest because he did not want to leave my side. My oldest son was also confused and did not understand what was happening. In tears myself, I asked my boys to be brave, and I promised we would be together again soon. I begged the woman who took my children to keep them together so they could at least have each other.

This is a description from a father seeking asylum at the San Ysidro Port of Entry:

I was told I was going to be separated from my son. I suffer from high blood pressure and felt as though I was having a heart attack. . . . I feel like I was in shock and do not remember what happened next or even how I got to the detention center after that. All I can remember is how much my son and I were both crying as they took him away.

The anguish inflicted on these parents and children at the moment they are separating is excruciating. For those of us who are parents, it is inconceivable, but it is just the beginning. Parents are given limited information—sometimes none at all—about where their children are being held, in whose care, or for how long. Some have begged the courts for information, frustrating judges who know little more than the parents. Some are deported while their children remain in unknown locations in the United States. Pediatricians describe the trauma that can be inflicted on these children as toxic stress. It results in lasting damage to a child's health.

Who here would tolerate such a thing if it were happening to American children? Who would defend such an abhorrent practice that was happening in another country—say, Russia or any other country? None of us would. We would condemn it.

But all of this lays bare the ugly truth about the true intent of this policy: to strike fear into the hearts of families who are seeking refuge from gang violence, chaos, murder, and rape in their home countries. The message could not be clearer: If you try to seek refuge in the United States, which is your right under international law, if you seek your right, if you seek refuge, if you seek the right you have under international law, we in America will punish you and punish your family because you are not welcome here.

This policy unquestionably flouts our domestic and international legal obligations. Worse, it flies in the face of who we are. In the past, we have shown the world that protecting our homeland is not incompatible with providing refuge to the vulnerable. We have proven that being a nation of laws is not antithetical to being a country of compassion. We have demonstrated that our unmatched power is derived in part from how we treat the most powerless among us. But President Trump's policy abandons our principles. Actually, it abandons our identity as a moral beacon for the world.

Republicans and Democrats must speak with one voice to condemn this cruelty. Family separation is no more a Republican policy than a Democratic

policy. It is neither. It is an un-American policy.

The United States, this great country that beckoned my maternal grandparents to come to the United States and Vermont, or my great-grandparents, paternal grandparents to come to the United States and Vermont—this great country must not be seen as terrorizing children to score political points. That is beneath the greatness of the United States. It is wrong. It is abhorrent. We must not be seen as pursuing policies with the intent of inflicting pain and anguish on vulnerable people, on children.

I hope Senators of both parties with join me in condemning this outrageous practice of forced family separation. We are a nation that is better than this. We have always thought of ourselves as better than this. Well, it is time we acted like we are better than this.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE REPUBLICAN-LED CONGRESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the May jobs report came out last Friday, and here are some of the headlines.

This is from Bloomberg: “U.S. Payrolls Rise 223,000; Jobless Rate Matches 48-Year Low.”

This is from CNN: “Unemployment rate matches lowest point in half a century.”

From the New York Times: “We Ran Out of Words to Describe How Good the Job Numbers Are.”

In other words, the May jobs report was more good news for American workers. The economy created 223,000 jobs in May. The unemployment rate dropped to 3.8 percent—the lowest rate since April of 2000. That is right. The last time unemployment was this low, the iPod hadn’t even been invented.

When the Republican-led Senate passed tax reform in December, there were estimates that this historic legislation would create nearly 1 million jobs for the American people. Well, the economy has already created more than 1 million jobs since tax reform was passed and 3.6 million jobs since President Trump was elected. The Republican pro-growth, pro-jobs agenda is working.

Government cannot create prosperity. It can’t create the jobs and opportunities that Americans need for a secure economic future. Only businesses can do that. But government can create the conditions for economic prosperity. It can make sure businesses are free to create jobs and opportunities by making sure they are not weighed down with burdensome taxes and regulations.

As everyone knows, the economy stagnated during the last administration. Recovery from the recession was historically weak. Wages were stagnant, and opportunities were often few and far between. A big reason for that was the fact that businesses large and

small were weighed down by burdensome regulations and an outdated Tax Code. So when President Trump took office, Republicans and President Trump made reversing our economic decline a priority. We rolled back burdensome regulations, and in December, we passed a historic reform of our Tax Code.

Before the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the Tax Code was not helping businesses grow and create jobs. In fact, it was doing just the opposite, and that had real consequences for American workers. A small business owner struggling to afford the hefty annual tax bill for her business was highly unlikely to be able to hire a new worker or to raise wages. A larger business struggling to stay competitive in the global marketplace, while paying a substantially higher tax rate than its foreign competitors, too often had limited funds to expand or increase investment here in the United States.

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

Now we are seeing results. Company after company has announced higher wages, better retirement benefits, bonuses, increased investment, new jobs, and more.

A recent survey from the National Association of Manufacturers reported that 77 percent of manufacturers plan to increase hiring as a result of tax reform, 72 percent plan to increase wages or benefits, and 86 percent report that they plan to increase investments, which means new jobs and opportunities for workers. Meanwhile, a recent survey from the National Federation of Independent Business reports that 75 percent of small business owners think the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will have a positive effect on their businesses.

The Republican economic agenda is working, and Republicans are going to keep working to ensure that American businesses can thrive and that American workers have access to the jobs and opportunities they need for long-term economic security. While we are doing that, we are also going to continue to focus on the rest of the work the American people elected us to do. As I have said before, Congress can walk and chew gum at the same time.

While we have been laser-focused on removing obstacles to economic growth

and job creation, we have also accomplished a lot of other things so far this Congress.

By the end of the Obama administration, our Nation’s military was facing a serious readiness shortfall. So this year we made the most significant investment in our military in 15 years, and we are going to continue to make sure that the men and women of our military have the resources they need to meet and defeat the threats of the 21st century. We recently passed legislation that makes much needed reforms to ensure our veterans have access to the healthcare they need, when and where they need it.

We also took action to preserve healthcare for children in need by enacting the longest extension of the Children’s Health Insurance Program in history, and we repealed ObamaCare’s burdensome individual mandate which forced many, many Americans to buy health insurance they didn’t want or couldn’t afford.

We passed legislation to fight sex trafficking, to combat opioid abuse, to help community banks, to increase school safety, to keep energy affordable, and more. Of course, we confirmed a number of highly qualified judges to fill vacancies in our judicial system.

Republicans are working to honor the trust the American people have placed in us. We are fighting to make life better for hard-working Americans. We have accomplished a lot so far this Congress, but we know there is a lot more work to be done. We are up to the challenge.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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

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

REFUGEE CRISIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, history is a great teacher, if you learn your history. The history of the United States, when it comes to refugees, is a checkered history.

Back during World War II, there were people who came to the borders of the United States and begged for our mercy, begged for our help. Nine hundred of them were on a ship called the *SS St. Louis*. They were Jews who came from Europe seeking refuge in the United States from the Nazis. Sadly, the United States turned them away. Several hundred of them were forced back to Europe and died in the Holocaust. On the floor of this U.S. Senate, a Democratic Senator from New York,

Robert Wagner, offered a measure to allow 10,000 Jewish children to come to the United States during World War II and escape the possibility of imprisonment and death during World War II in the Holocaust. That measure was defeated on the floor of the U.S. Senate. Those children were denied refuge in the United States.

Toward the end of the war, things started changing. Our policies became more open. We started accepting more people, but the record had been written. During the darkest days of World War II, the United States virtually closed its borders to those who were trying to escape Nazi terror.

After World War II, we decided we were wrong, that we had made a mistake, and that the United States would demonstrate to the world that we did care about those who came to the United States as refugees and those who came from other countries seeking asylum. We wrote an amazing history after World War II. When you think of the many different nations that turned to us when they faced the worst circumstances imaginable, you think about what happened in the United States.

The Cuban population escaping communism in Cuba, where did they come? They came here, and you can still find them. You can find them all over the United States but especially in Florida, near Miami, in New Jersey—but everywhere. The Cuban Americans have made an amazing contribution to this country. They came as refugees, but they became real Americans. In fact, they love this country so much so that I believe three of our Members of the U.S. Senate are Cuban Americans today.

That is quite a story, but it is not the only story about refugees coming to this country. You could add to that litany of people who came the Vietnamese after the end of the war in Vietnam, the Soviet Jews who escaped persecution in Russia to come to the United States, and the list is long. It includes refugees from all over the world who came to this country.

Now, we don't just open our doors and say: Walk in and make yourself at home. We ask questions. We do background checks. We do everything we can to be sure the person coming is the person they say they are and that they will be safe for the United States.

Over the years, the number of refugees we accepted on an annual basis went up to 80,000 and 100,000, and the United States developed an international reputation—a reputation for caring for people who were in the worst circumstances who came here looking for refuge. I run into refugees, their families, their children, and their grandchildren every single day. They have made a great contribution to our country, and we have made a great model for the world when it comes to accepting people who are in the worst, most terrifying circumstances.

That is about to change. We are in the process now of facing the worst ref-

ugee crisis in the history of the world in so many different places, and the United States, instead of maintaining this image and this model of accepting refugees from other countries, under President Donald Trump, has decided to do just the opposite. It would cut in half the number of refugees we would clear, review, interrogate, and accept in the United States each year to 45,000, which is the official number, but in actuality only about 14,000 have been accepted so far in the few months of this year. It is an indication we will not even reach 45,000.

There is something going on as well when it comes to those who seek asylum or refuge in this country that is equally horrifying and objectionable. The Trump administration has decided to discourage those who would come to our borders looking for safety by telling mothers who bring their infants and children that those children will be taken away from them by the Government of the United States when they arrive at our border. It is hard to imagine, but that is the stated policy now of the Trump administration. It is a cruel policy. It is not a policy consistent with American values.

Since our Nation's tragic failure during World War II to help Jewish refugees fleeing Adolph Hitler, generations of Americans have tried to set an example for the world by providing a safe haven to the world's most vulnerable people. Now we face the worst refugee crisis in the history of the world, with more than 65 million people around the world displaced from their homes, but the Trump administration is admitting the fewest refugees since World War II and going to extreme lengths to prevent victims of war and terrorism from seeking asylum in the United States.

So far this year, about 15,000 unaccompanied children have been apprehended at our southwest border. This is not necessarily a crisis in a nation of 325 million people, especially at a time when we are asking friendly nations—our allies in the Middle East—to do much more in accepting refugees.

The real crisis that gives cause to people showing up at our southern border asking for asylum can be traced to three countries—Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala—the so-called Northern Triangle. These countries in Central America have among the highest homicide rates in the world. Young girls face a constant threat of sexual violence with little or no protection. That is why families are doing desperate things, taking extraordinary risks to come to our border and ask for protection. Is there any parent who would not do the same to save their child?

How has the Trump administration responded to this refugee crisis on our border? They are trying to discourage families from fleeing to our borders by separating parents from their children. In March, we learned in my office in Chicago about a 7-year-old girl and her mother who came from the Democratic

Republic of the Congo. I have been there. It is a land of terrible massacres, barbarism. It is a land of violence. The Democratic Republic of the Congo had these two, a mother and daughter, come to our shores. They were separated for 4 months—a 7-year-old girl from her mother.

I asked the Department of Homeland Security inspector general to investigate this. Why would we separate a 7-year-old girl from her mom who is coming from the Congo seeking protection? Well, at the time, the Trump administration said: We don't separate families. That was the official statement at the time.

Last month, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the separation of children from their parents was a new “zero tolerance” approach, and now family separation has become the official policy of the Government of the United States of America. In just the first 2 weeks of this policy under Attorney General Sessions, 658 children have been impacted.

White House Chief of Staff John Kelly says separating families is “a tough deterrent” to parents who are fleeing persecution, and he dismissed any concerns because “the children will be taken care of—put into foster care or whatever.”

Well, our Nation's leading medical experts disagree. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association have condemned this official policy of the Trump administration separating families in immigration detention. Here is what the President of the American Academy of Pediatrics said:

Separating children from their parents contradicts everything we stand for as pediatricians—protecting and promoting children's health. In fact, highly stressful experiences, like family separation, can cause irreparable harm, disrupting a child's brain architecture and affecting his or her short- and long-term health. This type of prolonged exposure to serious stress—known as toxic stress—can carry lifelong consequences for these children.

The Trump administration has been taking some heat, deservedly, for separating families. In typical fashion—no surprise—they have decided the real cause of the problem would be the Democrats. Just this morning, President Trump tweeted: “Separating families at the Border is the fault of bad legislation passed by the Democrats,” but the law he is talking about wasn't passed by the Democrats. It is the bipartisan Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, which was passed by unanimous consent in the Senate and was signed into law by Republican President George W. Bush. President Trump has his facts wrong again.

This law has nothing to do with the separation of families. Instead, it ensures the United States meets its international obligations to protect unaccompanied children seeking safe haven in our country. It was a response to concerns by Republicans and Democrats that children apprehended by the

Border Patrol were being returned to countries where they might be further persecuted or killed.

Under this law, unaccompanied children from the Northern Triangle countries I mentioned earlier are transferred to the Department of Health and Human Services and placed in deportation proceedings, giving them a chance to make their case to a judge as to why they are seeking protection in America.

Consider “Samuel” and “Amelie,” who are siblings, ages 3 and 6, from Honduras. They are 3 and 6. When they arrived in the United States, they were traumatized and refused to speak. After months of counseling, Amelie revealed that both children had been raped by drug cartel members. Without the protection of this law which the President condemned this morning, these children would have been returned to Honduras and almost certain exploitation or death.

Two weeks ago, there was a hearing on unaccompanied children in the Senate Immigration Subcommittee which I serve on as a ranking member. We examined the administration’s claim that the law the President objects to is being exploited by gangs. Here is what we learned:

Unaccompanied children undergo multiple screenings and background checks when they present themselves at the border, and the law gives the government the authority to place any unaccompanied child in a secure facility if there is any notion of a threat. Since the year 2012, 6 years ago, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection has processed more than 250,000 unaccompanied children. Of those, how many were confirmed or suspected of affiliation with the MS-13 gang that the President talks about nonstop? Sixty. It was 60 out of 250,000—60 over 6 years, which is 10 a year, fewer than 1 a month. The President says we have to separate these kids because of drug gang worries. I don’t want a single member of any gang anywhere admitted into this country, period. For goodness’ sake, 250,000 children and 60 over a 6-year period were confirmed or suspected of affiliation with MS-13? Instead of stoking fears, we should focus on preventing unaccompanied children from being recruited by gangs.

Sadly, the Trump administration’s budget is slashing funding for the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the government agency that is responsible for these important gang prevention efforts.

At our hearing, we also discussed the conditions in the Northern Triangle countries in Central America that are driving families to flee to our border. If people were migrating because of the so-called legal loopholes, which we hear so often about from this administration, they wouldn’t be just coming from three countries; they would be coming from all over the region, but we learned more than 90 percent of the unaccompanied kids referred to the De-

partment of Health and Human Services are from three nations—the three of the Northern Triangle.

Instead of addressing the root causes that are driving migration from these countries, the Trump administration is making the situation on the ground worse. The administration’s budget request for the region would slash aid by more than one-third, and the administration is terminating the temporary protected status for two of these countries—El Salvador and Honduras, forcing many people to return to them even though these countries are clearly unstable.

Last year, the administration also ended the Central American Minors Program, which permitted children from the Northern Triangle to apply for refugee resettlement from their home country. We said to mothers with their babies and their infants: Don’t make this dangerous journey. If you are in danger in your home country and want to seek asylum or refuge in the United States, make the application from where you are before you have to make that journey. Unfortunately, that came to an end with the administration’s request to stop the program.

There are many issues to come before the American people but few that have stoked emotions more than this issue. The notion that the United States of America—over 300 million good and caring people—would make it an official policy to separate these infants and toddlers and children from their mothers and fathers is not American. It is extreme, it is mean, and it is cruel. Sadly, it is the official policy—the so-called zero-tolerance policy that has been announced by Attorney General Sessions.

We learned a bitter lesson back in World War II. We ignored the realities of human suffering. People across the world asked: What is going on in America? What are their values? After that war, we tried to make it clear what we do stand for, the things that are clearly important, and now this administration has decided we can no longer afford to do that. We have to separate children from their mothers, separate them by thousands of miles, put them into foster care, remove them from their mothers, even if that parent qualifies for protection here in the United States under our laws of asylum.

This is a sad and cruel policy. I hope Americans across the board will stand up and speak up. We are a better Nation than this.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BIG BANKS AND THE SECOND AMENDMENT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I rise today because, in my judgement, we are in the midst of a deeply troubling trend regarding banking and the Second Amendment. I know that seems a bit strange. What does banking have to do with the Second Amendment? I have wondered that myself. Allow me to explain.

We have 120 million gun owners in America. Like those Americans, I am alarmed by the activist anti-gun policies unveiled by the “we are smarter than you” financial elites who run two Wall Street banks: Citigroup and Bank of America. They have a political agenda, and those banks’ political agenda stands to hurt many small businesses in my State of Louisiana that are going to lose their banking services simply because these small businesses choose to exercise their constitutionally protected Second Amendment rights.

On March 22 of this year, Citigroup issued a press release. That press release detailed how Citigroup will penalize banking clients who follow Federal, State, and local gun laws. Citigroup’s new policy will tell businesses what kinds of firearms they can stock, what kinds of accessories those small businesses can stock in their stores, and who they can sell them to. I thought this was America.

This new policy has already taken effect all across Citigroup, and it has impacted hundreds of small businesses, institutional clients, and even their credit card partners.

Not to be outdone, 2 weeks later, Bank of America joined in. On April 10, Bank of America announced that it will no longer loan money to businesses that, in its opinion, are “deplorable” because those businesses manufacture legal semiautomatic rifles. Targeting firearms owners and business owners is not only an affront to responsible, law-abiding, constitutional gun owners across this country; it is a threat to the sanctity of our very Constitution and the Second Amendment.

I realize that the management of these two banks have a constitution whose bill of rights jumps from one to three, but I can assure them that in the Constitution read by the rest of America, there is a Second Amendment.

I have written to both the chief executive officers of Citigroup and Bank of America about my concerns, and they have yet to respond. I understand that Mr. Brian Moynihan, the CEO of Bank of America, is actually here in Washington lobbying folks on Capitol Hill this week. I suppose he was too busy to come by and address my concerns. Once again, I invite him to come by my office and speak about this in person.

I can’t overstate the gravity of this issue. It is important for consumers and businesses all across America. Both Citigroup and Bank of America are considered by the U.S. Government to be “systemically important banks.”

That means they are too big to fail. That is why the American taxpayers had to bail them out in 2009.

The American taxpayers, many of whom Citigroup and Bank of America now condescend to across our great land, gave Citigroup \$476 billion of their hard-earned money—not \$476 million to bail out Citigroup, \$476 billion. And the American taxpayers, many of whom choose to exercise their rights under the Second Amendment and whom these banks are trying to now punish, gave Bank of America \$336 billion in 2008 and 2009 to keep them from going broke.

These banks are supposed to act as a source of credit for households and businesses and local and State governments and as a source of liquidity for the entire banking system, but that also means their corporate policies will have ripple effects through every corner of our economy, from consumers and businesses of all sizes to banks and nonbank holding companies.

If the banking system worked like a grocery store, I would still disagree with these new anti-gun rules by Citigroup and Bank of America, but I would respect their rights to enact whatever corporate policies align with their beliefs. But banks are not grocery stores. A grocery store doesn't need a government charter to operate. A grocery store doesn't have a government corporation backed by the taxpayers of this country to insure their deposits. A grocery store doesn't have a government bank that pays them interest. Banks do.

One grocery store doesn't get so big that it lends and borrows and buys and sells from nearly every other grocery store in the country. Citigroup does, and so does Bank of America.

A grocery store doesn't need an \$812.3 billion bailout from the American taxpayers, many of whom choose to exercise their rights under the U.S. Constitution, including, but not limited to, the Second Amendment.

Citigroup and Bank of America have decided to make banking a red-versus-blue issue by trampling on the Second Amendment rights of small business owners and therefore all Americans.

If additional big consumer banks come out with similar anti-Second Amendment policies, it will get harder and harder for businesses in my State of Louisiana and small businesses in other States and elsewhere to find banking services. We will have red banks, and we will have blue banks. I don't think that is what we want in America.

I want to make sure that the Federal Government isn't rewarding this behavior with even more taxpayer dollars. I think \$1 trillion to bail out these two banks by the American taxpayers is quite enough.

I have already petitioned the General Services Administration to cancel the Federal Government's \$700 billion contract with Citigroup, and I have urged officials in the State of Louisiana to

reevaluate all State contracts with any Wall Street bank that chooses to implement an extra-legal policy that infringes on the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Citigroup and Bank of America owe their continued existence to the generosity of the American taxpayer. If it weren't for the American taxpayer, there would be no Citigroup; there would be no Bank of America. I find it very disturbing that these Wall Street banks may be profiting from taxpayer-funded contracts at the same time they are pushing a political agenda—and that is what it is, a political agenda—and severing ties with law-abiding businesses in the process. Given the size of these banks, it is likely that the same is true in States across America.

I find it offensive—I find it offensive—that Wall Street banks are taking taxpayer dollars with one hand and condescending to them with their “we know better than you do” attitude by using the other hand to come after the guns those taxpayers lawfully own under the Second Amendment. Rather than impose its political agenda on law-abiding citizens, these Wall Street banks ought to remember how taxpayers spent billions of dollars—almost \$1 trillion—to bail them out after the 2008 financial crisis. They owe a tremendous debt to the American people, and it seems they have a very short memory.

We don't need red banks in America. We don't need blue banks in America. We need safe banks in America.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO DENNIS WILLIAMS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to someone who has been fighting for working men and women his entire career.

Just for a moment, let's think back to 1977. The top movie that year was “Star Wars”—the original one—and the average movie ticket cost \$2.23. The Apple II computer went on sale. It cost \$1,298, not including the television you needed to use for a monitor. The space shuttle *Enterprise* took its first test flight, perched on top of a Boeing 747. And a young Marine Corps veteran and salvage welder at J.I. Case first joined UAW Local 806 in Rock Island, IL. He began fighting at that point for workers' rights.

A few things have changed since then. “Star Wars” and Apple have evolved, and the space shuttle has retired. Yet one thing hasn't changed: Dennis Williams is just as dedicated to the working men and women of the UAW today as he was four decades ago. Over the years, he has served them in a number of ways, including negotiating

the first contract at Mitsubishi Motors North America in Bloomington, IL; organizing Indiana State employees; helping Local 844 in Vermont, IL, obtain their first contract; and serving locals throughout the nine States of Region 4.

In 2010, he was elected UAW's secretary-treasurer. In 2014, he was elected United Auto Workers' president, a position he has held with distinction since then. It hasn't been an easy time to lead the UAW. The great recession hit the American automobile industry very hard. Some folks thought we should just let the auto industry go bankrupt. Instead, the United Auto Workers made sacrifices, stood strong, stood together, and weathered the storm. Under Dennis Williams' leadership, the UAW ended 2017 with a fiscal surplus for the third straight year and with more than 430,000 members—up 60,000 members since 2011. It is no surprise. Anyone who has worked with Dennis knows just how dedicated he is to his members and to the communities where they live and where they work.

Just ask the people of Flint. During the water crisis—which, by the way, continues on—UAW members from all over the country were some of the first ones there to help. They collected bottled water and distributed it in their own vehicles, going door to door to help, even traveling to Washington, DC, to demand action from Congress. We are so pleased that they helped us get action to help the families in Flint.

That tells us a little something about the character of the members of the UAW. Yet, it also tells us a little bit about their leader—a man who long ago signed up to serve his country and has simply never stopped. I think that Dennis would say it is about solidarity. He wrote in an editorial in the Detroit News last month:

We believe that no matter where you come from, who you are, what language you speak, or what religion you practice—being in a union is about working men and women standing up for each other. That's how it was in 1935 when the UAW was formed, and that's how it is now.

To Dennis Williams, thank you for your service, your hard work, and your dedication to making life better for working men and women so that we can actually have and sustain and grow an American middle class. I know that the members of the UAW join me in wishing you the very best in your well-earned retirement.

I know that my partner and colleague from Michigan will be coming to the floor in just a bit.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, the history of the United Auto Workers is at the heart of what has made the United States a global economic powerhouse. It is tied to the growth of the thriving manufacturing sector and the birth of the American middle class.

Dennis Williams, UAW president since 2014, is a strong contributor to this history. His leadership reflects a deep commitment to American workers and a clear eye toward the future. Since the union's formation in 1935, UAW members have stood together to ensure that their hard work is met with fair wages, safe workplaces, and reasonable hours. For over 80 years, the voice of the UAW has amplified the voice of the American worker. Dennis Williams is a champion of keeping this voice strong in the 21st century.

Williams joined UAW Local 806 as a salvage welder in 1977, following his service in the U.S. Marine Corps. There, he started his long path of elected union leadership and served as chairman of the Bargaining Committee. In the coming years, Williams would rise to the positions of international representative, Region 4 assistant director, and Region 4 director. In 2010, UAW members elected him as secretary-treasurer, followed by the presidency in 2014.

No matter what position Williams undertook during his decades of UAW leadership, he always stayed true to his roots. After becoming UAW president, he prioritized visiting union plants and locals to engage with members directly. He stated: "I love the smell of black coffee and the smoke of the factory and walking up to UAW members and saying, 'brother' or 'sister'."

His passion for everything the UAW stands for, along with his businesslike approach to tough decisions, enabled Williams to take on some difficult challenges during his presidency.

Just as Williams started in his role, Michigan—home to around one-third of UAW members—had recently become a so-called right-to-work State. Michigan is now one of 28 States with policies designed to undermine union participation and workers' rights to collective bargaining. Despite tides of State and Federal anti-worker efforts, Williams remained practical and optimistic about overcoming any challenges that came the UAW's way. He emphasized the importance of sitting down and talking through issues rather than resorting to confrontation.

Williams was steadfast about not giving up on organizing, and he has actively pursued new approaches to organizing that would keep the UAW strong in the future. His strategy has definitely paid off. During Williams' tenure, he successfully fought for the establishment of local unions at Volkswagen and Mercedes locations in the United States and for casino workers in Las Vegas. Under Williams' leadership, UAW membership has increased by almost 7 percent—over 27,000 new members—between 2014 and 2017. The

growth rate and membership over this past year has been the highest in a 1-year period since 2010.

I am deeply honored by Dennis Williams' representation of over 430,000 UAW members, including tens of thousands of workers in my State of Michigan. I wish him well in his retirement, along with his wife, Donna, of 43 years, his sons, Ryan and Matthew, and his grandchildren, Kendahl and Kai.

I know I speak on behalf of many Michigan workers when I sincerely thank Dennis Williams for his admirable service as the UAW's 11th president.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes as in morning business.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, 30 years ago this month, Dr. James Hansen testified before the U.S. Congress on the need to address climate change—30 years ago this month. He was a top NASA climate scientist. On a hot summer day in June of 1988, before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Dr. Hansen testified that "global warming has reached a level such that we can ascribe with a high degree of confidence a cause and effect relationship between the greenhouse effect and observed warming." He said, "It is already happening now."

Thirty years have passed since then—30 years of added science, 30 years of new science, 30 years of updated reports, and 30 years of mounting evidence of how right Hansen was. Yet, here we still are in Congress still willfully ignoring the unprecedented changes to the climate and the oceans—changes that threaten our planet and its rich array of plant and animal life, changes that put at risk homes, farms, forests, and coasts, changes that affect our very human health and well-being. These are not computer model projections of the distant future but changes we are seeing right before our very eyes now.

Carbon-driven climate change is particularly acute in polar areas. Today, I want to focus on the melting and destabilization of the Antarctic polar ice cap.

Rhode Island is a long way from Antarctica. Florida is a less long way from Antarctica—it is still a pretty long way—but we are coastal States. In Rhode Island, the sea level is already up 11 inches along our shores, and far

more sea level rise, accelerating sea level rise, is expected. The coastal towns and cities in the Presiding Officer's State are seeing similar encroachments of the ocean into their territories.

Here is how Antarctica is changing and what it means for our American shores.

The Antarctic ice sheet spans the South Pole, extending almost 14 million square kilometers—roughly the size of the contiguous United States and Mexico combined. The Antarctic ice sheet is the largest single mass of frozen water on planet Earth, containing 30 million cubic kilometers of ice. If the Antarctic ice sheet were to melt completely, you could actually do fairly simple math as to what would happen to that water. Sea levels could rise 200 feet above current levels, engulfing coastal regions worldwide.

This map shows Florida if we lose the West Antarctic ice sheet. As the map shows, it would inundate much of coastal and southern Florida, putting Miami and other cities completely underwater. It looks about the same here, if you lose the Greenland ice sheet, with there being similar damage and loss to Florida. Yet, here, if you lose the East Antarctic ice sheet, you more or less wipe out the entire State of Florida. You wipe out a few little islands here, a little nub below Georgia there, but essentially Florida is gone.

Imagine the entire population of Florida having to migrate to other States with its State now being uninhabitable. It seems like a crazy notion, but Kentucky's climate planning documents have included the prospect of climate refugees having to flee to Kentucky from America's inundated coasts. So it matters to understand how Antarctic ice sheets work and how they differ from ice shelves.

Ice sheets form on land when more snow accumulates in winter than melts during the summer. Over thousands of years, layers of snow pile up, growing thicker and denser as the weight of new layers compacts the layers below into ice. Over time, that ice flows downhill to the coasts and then ultimately out to sea as glaciers and then ice shelves.

Floating ice shelves surround Antarctica. These shelves physically brace the land-based ice sheet, slowing down its flow into the sea. A rough balance emerges as new snowfall on the ice sheets and the slow flow of the ice balance the melting of the ice shelf around the periphery where the ice shelf meets the ocean. We are now witnessing what appears to be an unraveling of this equilibrium. Climate change is what is causing this massive destabilization.

Since 1950, on the Antarctic Peninsula, the air has warmed 2.5 degrees Celsius. Warming ocean waters erode the West Antarctic ice sheets from below as the warming air melts them from above. Once the ice shelf melts back, you have the loss of the buttress

effect, and the ice sheet on land can then accelerate, with that buttress effect diminished, more rapidly into the sea, causing a more rapid rise in sea level.

The effect of this is actually measurable, and we measure it. Observations from the NASA and German Aerospace Center's twin Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment satellites measure these losses to be around 125 gigatons of ice per year. What is a gigaton of ice? A gigaton is 1 billion tons. Meredith Nettles of the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University described a gigaton-sized piece of ice this way: "If you took the whole National Mall"—here we are in Washington—"and covered it up with ice to a height about four times as high as the [Washington] monument. . . ."

Imagine walking out onto the Capitol steps, looking out all the way down the National Mall to the Washington Monument and imagining that not only to the top of the Washington Monument but four times as high is a single, giant mass of ice—as she said, "all the way down from the Capitol steps to the Lincoln Memorial" and four times as high as the Washington Monument. Then imagine 125 times that—every year.

The destabilization of the ice shelves is most dire in West Antarctica, where research shows the massive Thwaites Glacier retreating at 300 to 400 meters per year along a 125-mile segment. Larger than Pennsylvania, the Thwaites Glacier has discharged more than 100 gigatons of ice per year in recent years. That is the flood of 100 of those blocks that are four times the height of the Washington Monument and running from here all the way to the Lincoln Memorial 100 times every 3 days—another one into the ocean, piling up, piling up. If we lost the Thwaites Glacier, that alone would contribute several meters to global sea level rise.

So far, in Rhode Island, remember, we are dealing with less than 1 foot of sea level rise that we have experienced—6 to 12 feet is predicted—but add this in and the situation of our coastal States become quite dire.

These images were created with NASA satellite data. They show changes in Antarctic ice mass just since 2002. This data does not measure the floating ice shelves which are shown here in gray. On the ice sheets, dark orange and red colors indicate losses of ice sheet mass and light-blue shades indicate gains. Climate deniers focus on the gains in actually a fraudulent abuse of the data and the public's trust, but that is what they do; but, overall, during the past 15 years, the West Antarctic ice sheet experienced major ice mass loss. The darkest red, representing the biggest loss, is at the Thwaites Glacier.

Of course, when glaciers melt, the seas rise. In April, a U.S. Geological Survey study, funded by the Pentagon, found that our military bases on low-

elevation islands may become uninhabitable within mere decades. The recommendation is, we have to start planning to relocate them because they will no longer be useful. Just 2 weeks ago, our National Park Service released a report showing sea level rise damaging park sites like Jamestown and Assateague Island in Virginia and Jean Lafitte National Historical Park in Louisiana. NASA is concerned enough about this Antarctic ice situation that it is launching new satellites to monitor it.

Fossil fuel industry front groups continue to deny and disparage the work of scientists at NOAA, NASA, and other Federal scientific agencies. The polluters have an obedient mouthpiece in the Wall Street Journal editorial page, which just last month ran climate denier Fred Singer denying that rising sea levels observed around the globe are the result of global warming, and of course saying it is not the result of carbon pollution or fossil fuels. The Journal page, of course, neglects to mention this denier's deep connections to the fossil fuel industry, the Heritage Foundation, the Heartland Institute, the CATO Institute, and other climate denial front groups bankrolled by ExxonMobil and the oil industry and the Koch political apparatus.

We even heard a Republican Congressman claim that erosion and rocks falling into the sea are what is driving sea level rise—anything but fossil fuel. He said, "Every time you have that soil or rock or whatever it is that is deposited into the seas, that forces the sea levels to rise, because now you have less space in those oceans, because the bottom is moving up."

It is laughable. Phil Duffy, president of the Woods Hole Research Center and former adviser to the U.S. Global Change Research Program responded: "On human time scales, those are miniscule effects."

Once again, anything for the fossil fuel industry. Complete subservience to the fossil fuel industry seems to be the rule around Congress.

About this sordid political equation, retired U.S. Navy RADM Dr. David Titley probably said it best. He said:

The ice doesn't care. The ice doesn't care who is in the White House. It doesn't care which party controls your Congress. It doesn't care which party controls your Parliament. It just melts.

Of course, in addition to the melt, a warming ocean expands, following the law of thermal expansion, and our coasts, as a result, face new and serious dangers.

Republicans in Congress can continue to ignore all of the evidence, but that doesn't change what our carbon pollution does in the atmosphere and the oceans. Our carbon pollution will still trap heat in the atmosphere. It will still acidify the oceans. The laws of chemistry don't suspend because we can't pass sensible laws to solve this problem. The chemistry and the physics of these effects of our carbon pollu-

tion don't care what we do. The polar icecaps melting don't care that fossil fuel flunkies deny it. Denial of these facts doesn't protect our coasts and doesn't protect our coastal communities from looming danger. One day soon, we are going to have to wake up. Fossil fuel influence or no fossil fuel influence, we are going to have to wake up.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the confirmation vote on the Axon nomination occur at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, June 6; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the June 4, 2018, vote on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 542, the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States district judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky. I would have voted yea.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 112, on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States district judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 113, on the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States district judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 114, on the motion to