

chairman on the Foreign Relations Committee is trying to do here at the core of it is the critical element.

I am going to be supportive because of this one singular statement under the resolved clause by the Senate and the House of Representatives that the Senate “believes Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is responsible for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi.”

Regardless of all of my other concerns about language, that is the central essence of what the chairman is going to do. I think it is incredibly important for the Senate to speak on that issue and, hopefully, speak with one voice.

With that, I withdraw my objection. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Reserving the right to object, I will not object, but I stand to support this.

Jamal Khashoggi was a Virginia resident. His children are American citizens and Virginia residents, and it is important for the Senate to speak on this matter.

I withdraw the objection.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the joint resolution.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the joint resolution be considered read a third time.

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

The joint resolution was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. CORKER. I know of no further debate on the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Hearing none, the joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

The preamble was agreed to.

The joint resolution (S.J. Res. 69) was passed as follows:

S.J. RES. 69

Whereas the ongoing civil war in Yemen has exacerbated that country’s humanitarian crisis, in which nearly 12,000,000 people are suffering from “severe hunger,” according to the United Nations’ World Food Programme;

Whereas there is no military solution to the conflict;

Whereas the United States-Saudi Arabia relationship is important to United States national security and economic interests;

Whereas the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has, in recent years, engaged in concerning behavior, including its conduct in the civil war in Yemen, apparent detention of the Prime Minister of Lebanon, undermining the unity of the Gulf Cooperation Council, expulsion of the Canadian ambassador, suppression of dissent within the Kingdom, and the murder of Jamal Khashoggi;

Whereas misleading statements by the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia regarding the murder of Jamal Khashoggi have undermined trust and confidence in the longstanding friendship between the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; and

Whereas such erratic actions place unnecessary strain on the United States-Saudi

Arabia relationship, which is an essential element of regional stability: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Senate—

(1) believes Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is responsible for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi;

(2) acknowledges the United States Government has sanctioned 17 Saudi individuals under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (subtitle F of title XII of Public Law 114-328; 22 U.S.C. 2656 note) for their roles in the murder;

(3) calls for the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to ensure appropriate accountability for all those responsible for Jamal Khashoggi’s murder;

(4) calls on the Government of Saudi Arabia to release Raif Badawi, Samar Badawi, and the Saudi women’s rights activists who were arrested as political prisoners in 2018;

(5) encourages the Government of Saudi Arabia to redouble its efforts to enact economic and social reforms;

(6) calls on the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to respect the rights of its citizens and moderate its increasingly erratic foreign policy;

(7) warns that the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s increasing purchases of military equipment from, and cooperation with, the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China, challenges the strength and integrity of the long-standing military-to-military relationship between the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and may introduce significant national security and economic risks to both parties;

(8) demands that all parties seek an immediate cease-fire and negotiated political solution to the Yemen conflict and increased humanitarian assistance to the victims of the conflict;

(9) condemns the Government of Iran’s provision of advanced lethal weapons to Houthi rebels, which have perpetuated the conflict and have been used indiscriminately against civilian targets in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Bab al Mandeb waterway;

(10) condemns Houthi rebels for egregious human rights abuses, including torture, use of human shields, and interference with, and diversion of, humanitarian aid shipments;

(11) demands that the Saudi-led coalition and all parties to the Yemen conflict seek to minimize civilian casualties at all times;

(12) supports the peace negotiations currently being managed by United Nations Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and encourages the United States Government to provide all possible support to these diplomatic efforts;

(13) declares that there is no statutory authorization for United States involvement in hostilities in the Yemen civil war; and

(14) supports the end of air-to-air refueling of Saudi-led coalition aircraft operating in Yemen.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I want to thank our ranking member and my friend, Senator MENENDEZ, for his tremendous cooperation for many years but especially over this last week, and Senator KAINE for coming in and supporting it.

I want to reiterate what the ranking member just said. The Senate has now unanimously said that Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman is responsible for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. That is a strong statement. I think it

speaks to the values we hold dear, as the rest of this resolution does.

I am glad the Senate is speaking with one voice, unanimously, toward this end. I thank the leader for accommodating—making this happen.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, before the chairman on Foreign Relations Committee leaves, I want to thank him for his extraordinary leadership. This is a bit of a thicket here with different points of view, but as a result of what the chairman has just offered, it is a clear, unambiguous message about how we feel about what happened to this journalist.

I want to thank him.

Mr. CORKER. I thank the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

SAVE OUR SEAS ACT OF 2018

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand that the Senate has received a message from the House to accompany S. 756.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany S. 756.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 756) entitled “An Act to reauthorize and amend the Marine Debris Act to promote international action to reduce marine debris, and for other purposes.”, do pass with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment with a further amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL] moves to concur in the House amendment to S. 756 with a further amendment numbered 4108.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The amendment is printed in today’s RECORD under “Text of Amendments.”)

Mr. McCONNELL. 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. 4109 TO AMENDMENT NO. 4108

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. 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] for Mr. KENNEDY proposes an amendment numbered 4109 to amendment No. 4108.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Director of the Bureau of Prisons to notify each victim of the offense for which the prisoner is imprisoned the date on which the prisoner will be released)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

Redesignate section 3635 of title 18, United States Code, as added by section 101(a) of this Act, as section 3636.

After section 3634 of title 18, United States Code, as added by section 101(a) of this Act, insert the following:

“SEC. 3635. NOTIFICATION.

“The Director of the Bureau of Prisons shall—

“(1) notify each victim of the offense for which the prisoner is imprisoned the date on which the prisoner will be released or if no victim can be notified due to death or injury, next of kin of a victim; and

“(2) make publicly available the rearrest data of each prisoner, the offense for which the prisoner is imprisoned, and any prior offense for which the prisoner was imprisoned, broken down by State, of any prisoner in prerelease custody or supervised release under section 3624.”.

In section 3624(g)(1) of title 18, as added by section 102(b)(1)(B) of this Act, add at the beginning of subparagraph (B) the following:

“(B) has been certified by the warden that the prisoner has been determined by the warden to have the programmatic, security, and reentry needs of the prisoner best met by being placed in prerelease custody or supervised release, after the warden—

“(i) has notified each victim of the offense for which the prisoner is imprisoned of such potential placement (or, if no victim can be notified due to death or injury, the next of kin of a victim); and

“(ii) has reviewed any statement regarding such placement made by the victim or next of kin of the victim, as applicable, after the notification described in clause (i); and

In section 3632(d)(4)(D) of title 18, United States Code, as added by section 101 of this Act, add at the end the following:

“(lxiii) Section 2422, relating to coercion and enticement.

“(lxiv) Section 249, relating to hate crimes.

“(lxv) Section 752, relating to instigating or aiding escape from Federal custody.

“(lxvi) Subsection (a) or (d) of section 2113, relating to bank robbery involving violence or risk of death.

“(lxvii) Section 2119(1), relating to taking a motor vehicle (commonly referred to as ‘carjacking’).

“(lxviii) Section 111(a), relating to assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers or employees.

“(lxix) Any of paragraphs (2) through (6) of section 113(a), relating to assault with intent to commit any felony (except murder or a violation of section 2241 or 2242), assault with a dangerous weapon, assault by striking, beating, or wounding, assault against a child, or assault resulting in serious bodily injury.

“(lxx) Any offense described in section 111(5) of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (34 U.S.C. 20911(5)) that is not otherwise listed in this subsection, relating to sex offenses, for which the offender is

sentenced to a term of imprisonment of more than 1 year.

“(lxxi) Any offense that is not otherwise listed in this subsection for which the offender is sentenced to a term of imprisonment of more than 1 year, and—

“(I) has as an element the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against the person or property of another, or

“(II) that, based on the facts of the offense, involved a substantial risk that physical force against the person or property of another may have been used in the course of committing the offense.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask that the second-degree amendment be divided in three parts in the form at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

The amendment, as divided, is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Director of the Bureau of Prisons to notify each victim of the offense for which the prisoner is imprisoned the date on which the prisoner will be released)

DIVISION I

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

Redesignate section 3635 of title 18, United States Code, as added by section 101(a) of this Act, as section 3636.

After section 3634 of title 18, United States Code, as added by section 101(a) of this Act, insert the following:

“SEC. 3635. NOTIFICATION.

“The Director of the Bureau of Prisons shall—

“(1) notify each victim of the offense for which the prisoner is imprisoned the date on which the prisoner will be released or if no victim can be notified due to death or injury, next of kin of a victim; and

“(2) make publicly available the rearrest data of each prisoner, the offense for which the prisoner is imprisoned, and any prior offense for which the prisoner was imprisoned, broken down by State, of any prisoner in prerelease custody or supervised release under section 3624.”.

DIVISION II

In section 3624(g)(1) of title 18, as added by section 102(b)(1)(B) of this Act, add at the beginning of subparagraph (B) the following:

“(B) has been certified by the warden that the prisoner has been determined by the warden to have the programmatic, security, and reentry needs of the prisoner best met by being placed in prerelease custody or supervised release, after the warden—

“(i) has notified each victim of the offense for which the prisoner is imprisoned of such potential placement (or, if no victim can be notified due to death or injury, the next of kin of a victim); and

“(ii) has reviewed any statement regarding such placement made by the victim or next of kin of the victim, as applicable, after the notification described in clause (i); and

DIVISION III

In section 3632(d)(4)(D) of title 18, United States Code, as added by section 101 of this Act, add at the end the following:

“(lxiii) Section 2422, relating to coercion and enticement.

“(lxiv) Section 249, relating to hate crimes.

“(lxv) Section 752, relating to instigating or aiding escape from Federal custody.

“(lxvi) Subsection (a) or (d) of section 2113, relating to bank robbery involving violence or risk of death.

“(lxvii) Section 2119(1), relating to taking a motor vehicle (commonly referred to as ‘carjacking’).

“(lxviii) Section 111(a), relating to assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers or employees.

“(lxix) Any of paragraphs (2) through (6) of section 113(a), relating to assault with intent to commit any felony (except murder or a violation of section 2241 or 2242), assault with a dangerous weapon, assault by striking, beating, or wounding, assault against a child, or assault resulting in serious bodily injury.

“(lxx) Any offense described in section 111(5) of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (34 U.S.C. 20911(5)) that is not otherwise listed in this subsection, relating to sex offenses, for which the offender is sentenced to a term of imprisonment of more than 1 year.

“(lxxi) Any offense that is not otherwise listed in this subsection for which the offender is sentenced to a term of imprisonment of more than 1 year, and—

“(I) has as an element the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against the person or property of another, or

“(II) that, based on the facts of the offense, involved a substantial risk that physical force against the person or property of another may have been used in the course of committing the offense.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the motion to concur with further amendment.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 756, a bill to reauthorize and amend the Marine Debris Act to promote international action to reduce marine debris, and for other purposes, with a further amendment numbered SA 4108.

Mitch McConnell, Mike Lee, John Cornyn, Chuck Grassley, Orrin G. Hatch, Tim Scott, Steve Daines, Jerry Moran, Todd Young, Susan M. Collins, Pat Roberts, Bill Cassidy, Lamar Alexander, Lindsey Graham, Jeff Flake, Rob Portman, Joni Ernst.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AGRICULTURE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2018

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon, along with my distinguished colleague and the ranking member of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, to

discuss the farm bill conference report—the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018.

I am grateful that my colleagues approved this measure with strong support. The vote was 87 to 13 earlier this week. I also applaud Members of the House for following suit with a similarly strong vote yesterday, and we look forward to the President signing the conference report into law soon.

The level of support is what happens when the Congress works in a bipartisan and bicameral fashion. Senator STABENOW and I started by listening to producers in Manhattan, KS, and then in Michigan. We continued to listen to stakeholders from all over the country. This is a good bill that accomplishes what producers asked us to do—first we listened; then they asked—to provide certainty and predictability for farmers and families in our rural communities.

The 2018 farm bill meets the needs of producers across all regions and all crops. It doesn't matter what you grow, and it doesn't matter whether you grow it in Kansas or elsewhere in this country—this bill is designed to work for you. It ensures that our voluntary conservation programs will keep farmland in operation while protecting our agricultural lands, forests, and other natural resources.

The bill focuses on program integrity—requiring better management to address challenges with fraud and abuse—and commonsense investments to strengthen our nutrition programs to ensure the long-term success of those truly in need of assistance. We make sure SNAP Employment and Training coordinates with the private sector to provide the skills that are needed for the jobs that are available in the workforce, and with trade and market uncertainty, to say the least, the bill provides certainty for our trade promotion and research programs.

Feeding an increasing global population is not simply an agriculture challenge; it is a national security challenge. This means we need to grow more and raise more with fewer resources. That will take investments in research, new technology, lines of credit, animal health activities, and proper risk management. It takes the government providing tools and then its getting out of the producers' way. More than 900—and counting—organizations that represent millions of agriculture, food, nutrition, hunger, forestry, conservation, rural, business, faith-based, research, and academic interests have issued statements of support.

On behalf of the taxpayer, we have made tough choices and have been very judicious with the scarce resources we have. This is a budget-neutral bill. Most importantly, this farm bill provides our ranchers, our farmers, and other rural stakeholders in Kansas and throughout the country with much needed certainty and predictability.

Simply put, getting this bill done has taken a team effort. I would like to

thank my staff members who are as follows: Staff Director James Glueck, DaNita Murray, Janae Brady, Fred Clark, Meghan Cline, Haley Donahue, Matt Erickson, Darin Guries, Chance Hunley, Chu Hwang, Chelsie Keys, Sara Little, Curt Mann, Andy Rezendes, Rob Rosado, Wayne Stoskopf, Katherine Thomas, and Andrew Vlasaty. From my personal office, I thank Jackie Cottrell, Amber Kirchhoefer, Will Stafford, Morgan Anderson, Stacy Daniels, and Ray Price.

I especially thank the distinguished ranking member, Senator STABENOW, and her team, which is led by Joe Shultz and Jacquelyn Schneider. She has been a great partner throughout the Senate and conference committee process. There were some tough days, but we both worked together to get the job done.

I am also grateful to Chairman MIKE CONAWAY and Ranking Member COLLIN PETERSON as well as their staff members on the House Agriculture Committee.

The efforts of Jessie Williams, Amanda Kelly, Bobby Mehta, Katie Salay, and Micah Wortham have been invaluable to the Senate Ag Committee and the conference process.

Additionally, I thank the technical support from Secretary Perdue—the Secretary of Agriculture has been simply outstanding—as well as his staff down at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He has been a great and valuable partner throughout this process. We are grateful for his support and the President's support of our Nation's farmers, ranchers, and growers.

I also appreciate the work of the Congressional Budget Office's staff, including Tiffany Arthur, Megan Carroll, Kathleen FitzGerald, Jennifer Gray, Jim Langley, and Robert Reese, as well as of the Congressional Research Service, including Val Heitshusen and Elizabeth Rybicki.

Finally, I am grateful for the help of the legislative counsels in the Senate: Heather Burnham, Deanna Edwards, Larissa Eltsefon, Christina Kennelly, Heather Lowell, Mark Mazzone, and Patrick Ryan. My apologies to all of those folks whose names I just mispronounced.

The staff members have done a fantastic job, and I am pleased they are members of our team.

My predecessor in this business—and one of my mentors a long time ago—was Senator Frank Carlson, of Kansas, who said there are no self-made men and women in public office, that it is your friends who make you what you are. I apply that to staff. All of the people I have just mentioned represent a great team effort in our getting this legislation passed in such fine fashion.

For all of them—and especially to my fellow Senators—we are grateful for the support we have received this week. Together, we have done what we were sent here to do—work in a bipartisan, bicameral manner. This is a good bill for farmers, ranchers, growers, con-

sumers—many of whom may take their food supply for granted—families and rural and smalltown America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise to discuss a true bipartisan victory along with my friend and colleague, the leader of our Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee. I hear a lot of people say that bipartisanship is all too rare these days, but in our committee, it is our bread and butter.

Specifically, I thank my partner and friend, Chairman PAT ROBERTS. He is the only person to have written a farm bill as both the chair of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees. Kansas is fortunate to have such a champion, and all of American agriculture owes him a debt of gratitude for his persistence, doggedness, and tenacity. Maybe it is his Marine training, but he never gave up on this bill even when negotiations got tough. Maybe I could be an honorary marine. He also knows that to do anything big, it takes a team approach. Thanks to his commitment to bipartisanship, we were able to achieve a real historic victory.

This summer, Chairman ROBERTS and I made history by passing our Senate farm bill by 86 votes, and I am pleased to say we beat that record this week by passing the final bill by 87 votes—the most ever.

One of the reasons I love my work on the Agriculture Committee is that the work we do truly affects everyone. From the well-being of our children to the viability of rural America, to the health of our lakes, rivers, and streams, to our access to the most abundant, most affordable, safest food supply in the world, the farm bill impacts all of us.

I like to say it is our rural economic development plan for the country, and that has been true since the very first one in the 1930s. In the wake of the Great Depression, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the first farm bill to get agriculture and our economy back on track.

Over the past 80 years, the role of the farm bill has evolved alongside our agricultural and rural economy. In the 1970s, nutrition assistance was linked to the farm bill for the first time, marking a major step in strengthening the connection between our farms and food. In the 1980s, we saw the first ever conservation title, demonstrating the critical role of preserving land, water, and wildlife while supporting working farms. In the 1990s, thanks to the leadership of my friend Senator PATRICK LEAHY, we recognized evolving consumer preferences through the creation of the National Organic Program. There is, of course, the landmark 1996 farm bill, in which then-House Chairman ROBERTS first left his mark, tackling one of the biggest challenges in farm policy—reducing the incentive for farmers to plant for payments rather than for markets.

In 2008, I was proud to author the creation of the first-ever specialty crop title, recognizing fruit and vegetable growers and local food systems for the first time.

In 2014, we made major reforms to commodity programs, streamlined our conservation title, and made specialty crop research and clean energy programs a permanent part of the farm bill. Each of these changes represented a leap forward in farm and food policy and progress to broaden the farm bill to support every corner of America and American agriculture.

The momentum toward recognizing the diversity of our farm and food economy has truly accelerated over the past 15 years. Now, in every title of the farm bill, you can find policies that reflect the wide variety of things we grow and how we grow them.

I am proud to say that this farm bill has continued the trajectory of progress to diversify American agriculture. From expanded crop insurance to historic assurance for urban farmers and improved coverage options for our dairy farmers, this bill helps all types of farms, all sizes of farms, and farmers in every region of the country.

In order to cultivate the next generation of agriculture, we made permanent investments to support veterans, socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers, and we expanded agricultural market opportunities so that our farmers can make a living.

Historic investments in organic farming help producers tap into one of the fastest growing sectors of agriculture. New, permanent support for international trade promotion will help our farmers sell their products abroad. Streamlined, permanent investments for farmers markets, food hubs, and local food processing will help our farmers sell to their neighbors.

While we know the farm bill supports our farmers, it also supports our families. We protected access to food assistance and said no to partisan changes that would take away food from those who need it most, while still working to improve access to healthy food and improving the program's integrity. I hope the administration takes note of this and does not try to push forward with regulations that conflict with the farm bill's bipartisan approach to protecting food assistance.

We continue the farm bill's legacy as one of the largest investments in land and water conservation. This bill maintains conservation investments and rejects harmful provisions that would jeopardize drinking water and public lands.

Instead, we focused on successful conservation partnerships that will actually grow funding by leveraging nearly \$3 billion in new private investment over the next decade.

We also lift up our small towns and rural communities and celebrate what makes them great places to live and raise a family. By making strong investments in rural water infrastruc-

ture and high-speed internet, we help revitalize rural America and grow opportunities.

These important priorities have been 80 years in the making, and there are a number of people I would like to thank for working hard to continue the legacy of this farm bill.

Of course, I want to thank my leader, our Democratic leader, for his leadership and support throughout this process; the majority leader, who made sure this bill moved quickly on the Senate floor and was an active participant in the Agriculture Committee, as well; and, of course, my partner, Senator ROBERTS, who stayed true to our commitment to deliver a bipartisan bill.

I want to thank our counterparts in the House, Chairman CONAWAY and Ranking Member PETERSON, for their hard work throughout this process, and all of our colleagues in the House and Senate who supported this bill with historic votes in the House and the Senate.

I also want to thank my incredible staff, who have worked so hard for almost 2 years to bring this farm bill to the finish line: my committee staff director, Joe Shultz and deputy staff director and policy director, Jacquelyn Schneider, who both led this process; our legal team, led by our chief counsel, Mary Beth Schultz, and our fellow, Ward Griffin; our amazing commodities and livestock team, Mike Schmidt and Kyle Varner, for supporting our farmers, with the help of farm bill veteran, Susan Keith, and our fellow, Riya Mehta; on team conservation, Ashley McKeon and Rosalyn Brumette, who protected our land and water, with the help of USDA detailee, Lindsay White; our forestry and environmental expert, Sean Babington, who preserved wildlife habitat and public lands; Katie Naessens, for her work to support the innovative future of agriculture, with the help of Dominique Warren; our rural development and energy expert, Kevin Bailey, for creating opportunities for our small towns; Katie Bergh, who led our work on trade and food aid to help our farmers feed the world.

I would like to thank, as well, my staff in my personal office: my chief of staff, Mike VanKuiken; legislative director, Emily Carwell; deputy chief of staff, Anne Stanski; my senior aide, Krystal Lattany; my communications director, Matt Williams; ag press secretary, Jess McCarron; and the rest of the communications team, Miranda Margowsky, Nirmeen Fahmy, and Amy Phillips Bursch; my State team, led by Teresa Plachetka, and our Michigan ag expert, Kali Fox.

I want to thank everyone on Senator Robert's team, especially James Glueck and DaNita Murray, true professionals who exemplified how to lead a farm bill conference.

We spent a lot of time together, and I say to the Senator: I know you spent a lot of time with Joe and Jacquelyn on our team. I think at the end, we were

working as one team, and that is something I am very, very grateful for.

I also thank Jessie Williams—as the chairman has said—Amanda Kelly, Bobby Mehta, and everyone who worked behind the scenes on the Ag Committee.

I also appreciate our floor staff, those in the leadership staff office who are so important, and CBO. Of course, I say thank you to all of the members of the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee and their staffs.

With a lot of hard work by a long list of very talented people, this Congress has passed a strong bill that supports the 16 million jobs in America that depend on agriculture and our food economy.

I look forward to the President of the United States signing this bill into law as soon as possible.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I first wanted to thank Senator ROBERTS and Senator STABENOW for their fine leadership on this farm bill, as well as their staffs. I had a great opportunity to thank them.

This was something that was universally well accepted and exciting for our State and, really, for every State in the country—the way we got 87 votes. As I noted, at home, we don't get that many votes for a volleyball resolution. It really put the bill in a good place to get this done. I thank them for their leadership.

I also want to thank Brian Werner from my own staff, who has long worked on these issues, as well as at home, Andy Martin and Chuck Ackman, who have done ag work for us in Minnesota. I thank them for their work on this bill as well.

TRIBUTE TO CLAIRE MCCASKILL

Mr. President, I am here to make some brief remarks about two of my favorite colleagues who are leaving us. They are both good friends of mine, both from the middle of the country, and both extraordinary leaders.

I will start with my friend, Senator CLAIRE MCCASKILL. Senator MCCASKILL and I were first elected at the same time, so we came in together.

During our years of serving together, I have seen this strong, incredible woman stand up for the people of Missouri and stand up for the people of this country.

We were the only two women in our Senate class when we came in. One of my first memories of CLAIRE, which occurred near the beginning of our time in the Senate, was that we were driving out of the Capitol together to go speak

at an event. I looked out the window, and there was my husband John walking across the lawn with a pink box. She sees him, and she looks at me, and she says: What is John doing, walking across the Capitol lawn with a pink gift-wrapped box?

I yelled out the car window, and I said: What are you doing with the pink box?

He yelled back: It is the Senate spouse club event. I am going to Jim Webb's wife's baby shower.

CLAIRE looked at my husband and said, in her typical, blunt way: That is the sexiest thing I have ever seen.

That is CLAIRE.

We were rejoicing together in the car at that moment, as we thought we were witnessing a milestone in Senate spouse history but also in our own histories and in the journey of having more women in the Senate.

CLAIRE is someone who never keeps quiet, who always speaks her mind, and that is so refreshing.

When she found out about the substandard care for our veterans at Walter Reed, she took it on. She was a freshman Senator, but she wasn't quiet, and she took it on.

Her dad was a veteran, and she felt that the veterans of today deserve the same quality care that he got. That is the kind of leadership she has always shown.

She never backs down, especially in the face of corruption. I think a lot of that was because of her work as a prosecutor. We shared that in common.

If there were rights that needed to be respected—great. If there were wrongs that needed to be righted, she was right there. She is never afraid to speak truth to power.

By the way, in her own words, she is now unleashed, and I know that will continue in a big way.

Whether she is at a hearing or writing one of her famous tweets, she does it in a voice that is 100 percent authentic and 100 percent CLAIRE MCCASKILL.

I will never forget when she was grilling Wall Street executives at a Senate hearing for their role in the financial crisis, and she said: "You guys have less oversight than a pit boss in Las Vegas." That is one example.

As Missouri's former State auditor and as someone who worked her way through school as a waitress, Senator MCCASKILL has always rightfully demanded accountability for those in positions of power.

We saw it again when she stood up to opioid manufacturers and distributors, investigating suspicious shipments of these dangerous drugs in communities across the country.

We saw it with her leadership in the fight against sex assault and online sex trafficking, where she worked to take on backpage.

We saw it in her fight to strengthen the role of independent watchdogs at our Federal Agencies and to expand protections for whistleblowers.

We saw it every time she stood up for American consumers, highlighting the

challenges that consumers often face when they get errors on their credit reports or when they have fraudulent robocalls.

I would always think of how she would challenge the commonsense wisdom of her beloved mom, Betty, who is no longer with us. I had the honor to meet Betty. So whenever I would watch CLAIRE take on these crimes—especially crimes against seniors—and speak out about them, I would always think of her mom and how her mom was such an early, powerful feminist and a woman who stood up and spoke truth to power.

Perhaps most of all, as I mentioned earlier, we saw it her work with Walter Reed on behalf of our Nation's veterans. In addition to the work she did in calling out what was happening at Walter Reed, it was CLAIRE who found out that contracting failures had led to thousands of graves at Arlington National Cemetery being unmarked or improperly marked.

It was CLAIRE whose legislation overhauled the IT systems at Arlington and ultimately held the Secretary of the Army accountable.

That was trademark CLAIRE: seeing an injustice, uncovering it, speaking out, and then never giving up until it is fixed. That is what she has done time and again.

What is cool about CLAIRE, despite what I wish had not happened—that she didn't win her election—is, she is the most resilient person I know, and she will continue to serve and continue to do that work in her way.

After a former political opponent once accused her of being unladylike, she once told an Iowa audience that the traits needed to excel in leadership—to speak out, be strong, take charge, change the world—are traits she sees as very, very ladylike.

CLAIRE has shown us how to be both strong and ladylike. It has been my privilege to serve with her. I am so honored to call her friend, and I am excited about what is to come for CLAIRE MCCASKILL.

TRIBUTE TO JOE DONNELLY

Mr. President, I am going to talk about my friend, Senator DONNELLY—also someone who made extraordinary contributions to his State, the State of Indiana, as well as to our country.

Indiana holds a special place in my heart. My husband, John, was born there. His parents met in a ballroom dance class at Ball State, of all places.

Our States share a lot of confusion because people always seem to not be able to tell the difference between Indianapolis and Minneapolis. There is a difference. We share some thriving metropolitan areas and a lot of tech jobs, things like that, in our two major metropolitan areas, but we also share rural areas.

Whenever I visited Indiana—and you know how much Indiana loves cars—well, JOE DONNELLY loves driving. I have been with him in South Bend, where he went to school at Notre

Dame, close to where he lives in Granger. Actually, I will never forget one time when I was in Indianapolis for something, and JOE drove all the way just to accompany me on this trip. He was by himself, drove down there, and drove me around to these campaign events. He always had his lunch bag with him just in case he needed some lunch—a paper bag—but then he decided he would treat me to his favorite lunch stop, Panera Bread.

He also believes in a simple idea about public service; that is, you don't just go where it is comfortable, you go where it is uncomfortable. JOE DONNELLY exhibits that kind of leadership by taking on the tough issues every time he can. For JOE, that has meant going to factories that have been shut down to meet with the employees or standing with former Indianapolis United Steelworkers leader Chuck Jones, who took on the President over jobs at an Indiana plant that were being sent to Mexico.

Later, at his retirement party, Chuck Jones said of JOE DONNELLY's efforts on behalf of the workers: He got it done and he didn't get the fanfare, but people benefited all the same.

That is what is so special, so powerful about JOE DONNELLY's leadership. He doesn't always get all the attention he deserves, but he has this incredible, understated strength and conviction. He has this great sense of humor that I wish everyone could see.

Mostly, he has been a champion for the people of his State, whether it was farmers when he served on the Agriculture Committee—he recently worked with Senator STABENOW and others to get that farm bill done—whether it is the work he has done in the Armed Services Committee on behalf of our military, or whether it is working with our servicemembers to make sure they get the mental health care they need and deserve. Because of JOE's convictions, his very first bill as a Senator was the Jacob Sexton Military Suicide Prevention Act, which required annual mental health assessments for all servicemembers. Because of his leadership, that legislation became the law of the land. He also teamed up with Senator YOUNG on a bill to improve mental health services for the law enforcement officers who sacrifice so much to keep our communities safe.

JOE has stood up in the fight against the opioid epidemic, passing legislation to help ensure that nonaddictive medications are developed and that substance abuse and treatment providers work in areas that have high overdose rates, like our rural communities.

JOE stood up against high rates on student loans by helping our students pay for school with our Empowering Student Borrowers Act.

Whenever you are lucky enough to work with JOE DONNELLY, you see his heart, his effectiveness, that twinkle in his eye, and you also see his caring work that he does every single day.

One of my funniest moments with JOE is I called him once when a report came out that showed how much money people have when they are in Congress, and they always have the richest Members at the top, and you keep looking down to see where you end up. I called JOE DONNELLY once and said: Guess what. We are tied. We have the same amount of money.

JOE DONNELLY, without missing a beat, said: I am sorry. I am sorry for you.

In any case, that was him.

Earlier this year, Senator DONNELLY was at a practice for the Democrats on the congressional baseball team. He was chatting with Congressman STEVE SCALISE, who had been a victim of that horrific shooting at a practice the year before. When asked about the majority whip's return to the field, JOE said: It is great to see him. You know, in the end, we are all brothers and sisters.

It is very sad to be losing one of my favorite brothers here in the Senate, but what I know is this: JOE DONNELLY will never stop. He is going to be doing great work. He will always do great work, and we look forward to seeing him again.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WICKER. 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. WICKER. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

TRIBUTE TO REX BUFFINGTON

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to recognize Rex Buffington, who is retiring next year after 30 years as the executive director of the John C. Stennis Center for Public Service Leadership.

Mr. Buffington had a tall order to fill in 1988 when he was named the first executive director of the newly created Stennis Center. This native of Meridian had been selected by John Stennis himself, demonstrating the confidence the Senator must have had in the young man. After all, the center would bear Stennis' name and would be located at his alma mater, Mississippi State University. The center would be a living tribute to his 41-year career in the Senate, which is still one of the longest in our Nation's history.

Under Rex Buffington's leadership and guidance, the Stennis Center has fulfilled its purpose as set forth by Congress. The center was established by statute for the purpose of "promoting public service as a career choice" and providing training and education to State and local leaders, congressional staff, and students.

As part of the legislative branch, the Stennis Center is subject to annual

oversight, and it has always proved its value. A major success of the center—and no doubt a credit to its longevity—is the reach of its leadership development programs. The center truly offers something for everyone, whether that person be a student body president, a Hill intern, a veteran staffer, or a Member of Congress.

One of the center's best known programs is the Congressional Staff Fellows Program, which counts among its alumni hundreds of senior level staffers. These chiefs of staff, staff directors, and legislative directors—representing different political parties, different parts of the country, and both congressional Chambers—are given the opportunity to discuss the challenges facing Congress and how it can work better for the American people. Through this important dialogue, the program not only brings a wealth of talent to the table but also opens the door to future collaboration between staffers who might otherwise never have met.

Rex Buffington is also a key supporter of the Stennis-Montgomery Association, a collaboration with the Stennis Center and the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Foundation, named after another graduate of Mississippi State University. The association encourages greater political participation among a group of MSU students of all backgrounds and academic disciplines. When these students visit Washington, I never fail to meet with them, and I never fail to be impressed.

Another of the center's signature events is the annual Southern Women in Political Service Conference. Since 1991, the conference has brought together a diverse group of women in politics to learn new skills and make new connections. Rex was certainly ahead of his time in recognizing the need to bring more women to the table as important policy decisions are made at every level of government.

Rex learned firsthand from the "Senator's Senator," as Senator Stennis was known, that a good mentor can have a profound impact on a young leader's career. He created the Emerging Leaders Program to connect senior congressional staff with those still early in their careers—a nod to Senator Stennis' legacy of lending his time and wisdom to new lawmakers.

In keeping with Senator Stennis' support for our Armed Forces, culminating in his role as chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Rex Buffington implemented initiatives to recognize military leaders and give them opportunities to speak directly with Members of Congress, often on an informal basis. As part of this initiative, I was privileged to cohost a series of meetings with Senator REED to bring together Members of this body and senior members of the military.

Rex Buffington and his staff of eight—four in Starkville and four in Washington—have encouraged young Americans to take part in their com-

munities and their government. This small but mighty team has helped to build productive working relationships and lasting friendships between Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate staffers, and those at different stages in their careers. The Senate and House are better because of Rex Buffington and the Stennis Center. Our work product is better. Many of my colleagues would agree, and I mention in particular my friend, Senator COONS from Delaware, who served with me on the center's board of trustees. It is my understanding that Senator COONS may be submitting remarks for the RECORD in honor of Rex's career.

I have no doubt that retirement will bring more opportunities for Rex to serve the Starkville community and to spend time with his wife, Anne, and their two children, John Gavin and Catherine. He certainly will not sit still in retirement. I offer this unsung hero, Rex Buffington, my sincere thanks for making the Stennis Center what it is today, and I wish him all the best in his next chapter.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, today, I am pleased to join my colleague Senator WICKER in honoring Rex Buffington, a friend and public servant who will soon retire from the John C. Stennis Center for Public Service Leadership, where he has served as executive director for three decades. Rex was present at the center's founding and has been instrumental in the development and success of this important legislative branch institution. He embodies the essence of its mission which endeavors to inspire and train new generations of leaders who seek out public service.

The late Senator John C. Stennis, who founded the center, embodied this commitment to public service, not only in his relationships with his colleagues, who called him a "Senator's Senator," but to all who admired the way he lived his life. Integrity, courage, commitment to duty, and hard work are among the core principles that marked his time in the Senate.

Given the late Senator's focus on public service, the Stennis Center's congressional mandate became clear—to attract young people to careers in public service, to provide training for leaders and future leaders in public service, and to offer training and development opportunities for senior congressional staff, Members of Congress, and other public servants.

Rex has played a vital role in helping to realize Senator Stennis's vision. Rex has said:

The Stennis Center believes that no government, regardless of its history and structure, can be better than the people who make it work. That is why our focus is on people over policy. We are confident that if we can get the best possible people in public service leadership, we will also get good policy.

From the creation of the Stennis Center in 1988, Rex Buffington has committed himself to memorializing those

ideals the late Senator Stennis embodied. At its core, the Stennis Center operates a unique, bipartisan development program for 30 of the most outstanding high-ranking congressional staff in the House and Senate. Best known for the flagship Stennis Congressional Staff Fellowship Program, Rex has ushered in nearly 400 senior-level congressional staff members through this practical, bipartisan, bicameral leadership development experience established in the 103rd Congress. These veteran staff members have in turn started a mentoring program for younger congressional staff, called Emerging Leaders.

Rex sought out many other ways to honor public service. He has been a strong supporter of our Nation's military servicemembers. Honoring the late Senator Stennis's relationship with the defense community, Rex has cultivated a unique civilian-military relations portfolio of programs at the Stennis Center. He was also instrumental in establishing programs that have inspired leaders at every level—from high school to newly elected Members of Congress. For example, over 300,000 high school students from across the country annually compete for a spot at the John C. Stennis National Student Congress.

Rex's hard work and dedication have been integral to the success of the Stennis Center and to thousands of public servants who have benefited from his counsel and leadership.

Prior to being appointed executive director, Rex served as Senator Stennis's press secretary and chief spokesperson and played a major role in shaping the Senator's legislative strategy. He has long been active in his local community and his church, serving in a variety of roles supporting youth, advocating for education, and participating in organizations such as Scouting, the United Way, the Rotary Club, the Boys and Girls Club, and many more.

Rex was born and raised in Meridian, MS, and graduated from Mississippi State University with a degree in communication. He started out as a news reporter for the Memphis Commercial Appeal before moving to Washington to work for Senator Stennis.

Rex has long been a steady, thoughtful, and committed leader. He has dedicated his professional life to the bipartisan work of promoting and strengthening the highest ideals of public service leadership in America and has provided vital services and resources to Members of Congress and their staff for 30 years. I want to thank Rex and his family for their commitment to public service, and I wish them all the best in the future.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

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

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

REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS OF SANDY HOOK
ELEMENTARY

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to remember those killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, in 2012, just 6 years ago. Tomorrow will be the anniversary of that horrible day, when America lost 20 first graders and 6 adults in one of the worst mass shootings in our Nation's history.

Since 2012, I have kept—and I know others have done similar things to remind us—one page from a newspaper on my desk in the Russell Building. I will not show all of it, but here is the top half of it. It is obviously yellowed from 6 years. It just happens to be the Wall Street Journal, dated Monday, December 17, 2012. At the top of the page it says: Connecticut school shooting. The headline there just says two words: Shattered lives. Then it gives a photograph of almost every child and every adult. They missed a few because of the timing of this. But then it has a biography of each individual killed. As I said, 20 of them were children.

We have to remember tragedies like this to remind ourselves of our obligation—on many issues, but this is certainly one of them. I wanted to start by reading the names of all of those 26 Americans who were killed on that day. I will just read through them, and after reading each name I will also note the age of the individual on that horrible day in December of 2012:

Charlotte Bacon, 6 years old; Daniel Barden 7; Rachel D'Avino, 29; Olivia Engel, 6; Josephine Gay, 7; Dylan Hockley, 6; Dawn Lafferty Hochsprung, 47; Madeleine Hsu, 6; Catherine Hubbard, 6; Chase Kowalski, 7; Jesse Lewis, 6; Ana Marquez-Greene, 6; James Mattioli, 6; Grace McDonnell, 7; Anne Marie Murphy, 52; Emilie Parker, 6; Jack Pinto, 6; Noah Pozner, 6; Caroline Previdi, 6; Jessica Rekos, 6; Avielle Richman, 6; Lauren Rousseau, 30; Mary Sherlach, 56; Victoria Soto, 27; Benjamin Wheeler, 6; and, Allison Wyatt, age 6.

Those are the 26 individuals.

There are so many ways to express our sorrow and to continue mourning as we did as a nation. I can't even imagine what each family had to live through and still lives through today, and how that community had to endure in that moment of horror—those days of horror and mourning and sadness and all these years later.

The great recording artist Bruce Springsteen, after the 9/11 attacks, wrote a number of songs reflecting upon that tragedy. One of the songs he wrote—at least the lyrics that I remember—probably capture the same sentiment that we all think about when we are thinking about that kind of a tragedy. The name of the song is “You're Missing,” and a refrain of the song goes like this:

You're missing, when I shut out the lights.
You're missing, when I close my eyes.
You're missing, when I see the sun rise.

I am sure that has been the circumstance for those families every

day, missing the loved one—for 20 of those families missing a loved one who was age 6 or age 7, and for 6 other families missing an adult family member of various ages.

We have a lot to do in this body, not only in the next couple of days but certainly as we start both the new year and a new Congress. This scourge of violence, which has consumed our country for so many years now, should be at the top of that list of priority issues we focus on. Just think about it this way: The 20 children who died at Sandy Hook would be in the seventh grade right now. As we still mourn, we must make sure that we come together to make sure no other family has to endure a tragedy like that.

The shooting at Sandy Hook was a turning point for me as a public official and I am sure a turning point for many Americans about what our obligation is to respond to this problem. The tragedy in Connecticut fundamentally changed the way I view both our Nation's response to gun violence and my own responsibility as a public official. I believe that each of us has an obligation to help take action, to work as Members of the U.S. Senate. I would include Members of the House, of course, and the executive branch.

We must continually ask ourselves a number of questions. One of those questions surely is, Is there nothing our Nation can do to try to prevent this kind of tragedy or other tragedies that we will note in a few moments? Is there nothing we can do to prevent this? There is no law, no action, no policy change on which we can come together to at least reduce the likelihood that we will have another mass shooting in a grade school or in a lot of other places around the country?

Some people here in Washington seem to believe that there literally is nothing we can do, the most powerful country in the world that has solved some big problems. We haven't solved all of them. We have solved some pretty tough problems in this Chamber and in the other body, the House, working together on a number of big issues over the years. But on this one, some people in Washington just throw up their hands and say there is nothing we can do—absolutely not a single law that we can pass—other than enforce existing law; that that is all we can do, and we hope that enforcement will reduce the likelihood, but if it doesn't, then we just have to throw up our hands. I don't believe that. I don't think many Americans believe that no matter what side of the political aisle they are on.

I believe we have an obligation to take a couple of steps. The first one ought to be easy because some of the data tells us that it is supported by 90 percent of Americans or maybe even more than 90 percent; that is, universal background checks.

We undertook an effort in the Senate in 2013, in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook massacre, and we made progress on getting bipartisan support for a universal background check bill, but we

haven't done a lot since then in the Senate on that issue. That is one bill we could vote on in 2019. I hope the majority leader will schedule a debate on that bill—whatever version we have now in front of us—or will in the new Congress. We can schedule debate and have a vote. Obviously, Senators can vote any way they want, but let's have a debate and let's vote on universal background checks.

Is that a magic wand which will wipe out this problem forever? No. Background checks will make it less likely that we will have the kinds of mass shootings we not only have endured as a nation but have grown, unfortunately, tragically accustomed to.

I believe as well—and I know there are plenty of people who disagree with me—that we ought to have a debate and a vote on another issue: banning military-style weapons. I know. I understand that we have, by some estimates, double-figure millions of these weapons already on our streets. I get that, but does that mean we should continue down this road and have 20 million and then 25 million of those weapons on our streets and then 30, 40, 50, 60 million? Just throw up our hands and say: That is all we can do; that we have to have tens of millions of military-style weapons—weapons that belong on a battlefield, not on our streets in our communities and our neighborhoods. That would be a good debate to have on that bill.

We ought to have a debate and a vote on a limitation on magazine capacity so we don't have one person who can spray hundreds of bullets in a matter of moments. Is there nothing we can do about that?

The greatest country in the world can't do anything about these issues, these votes?

How about preventing people on the terrorist watch list from getting their hands on a firearm? We made a determination after 9/11 that we were going to take certain steps—even against political pressure not to take certain steps—to protect our Nation from terrorists. One of them was, if you are a terrorist, we are going to do everything we can to prevent you from getting on an airplane, or if we have a reasonable suspicion that you are a terrorist, we are going to try to prevent you from being on an airplane so we don't have another 9/11.

The same country that did that, so far, because of inaction by the Congress over many years, allows that same individual who is too dangerous—we have deemed them too dangerous—to get on an airplane, to get a firearm because we haven't yet plugged that loophole. We have tried a couple of times but not nearly enough.

Let's at least have a debate on a few of these issues and have up-or-down votes. If you want to vote against them, fine, but let's not pretend that we are dealing with an issue when we don't even have a debate and don't even have votes. It doesn't make a lot

of sense to me, and I am sure it doesn't make sense to Americans, no matter what side of the debate they are on.

We can't simply throw up our hands and do nothing as thousands of lives are lost each year. Why not try to do something to reduce that number? We need a sustained debate and a series of votes. It is a good time, by the way, coming up. New year. New Congress in 2019. A brandnew Congress. We can start fresh by putting these issues on the floor of the Senate.

We need to make sure the American people know where their legislators—in this case, Federal legislators, Members of the House and Senate—stand so they can be held accountable. That is as American as anything we can do in this body.

We need to do it for the children and the staff who were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School. We need to make sure their lives are remembered—not just in mourning, not just in recognition of a tragedy, but are actually remembered by way of our action, of taking action and doing something substantial that will reduce the likelihood.

We have had too many of these tragedies in the last couple of years. I will do a partial list or a partial itemization of other tragedies—not all of them but just a few. We know these cities by the tragedies that took place in them: Orlando, in a nightclub; Charleston, in a house of worship; Sutherland Springs; Las Vegas; Parkland; Thousand Oaks; in my home State of Pennsylvania almost 2 months ago now at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, where the killer came into another house of worship on a Saturday morning and gunned down people who range in age, in that circumstance—not children but range in age from midfifties all the way to late eighties, early nineties, in age—11 people.

Whether it is Sandy Hook Elementary School or the Tree of Life synagogue or a lot of places in between—and I am mentioning just the ones since 2006, roughly; there were plenty before that—we have to not just remember but take action.

In 2018—just 1 year not yet completed—so far in 2018, there have been 13,743 gun deaths and 26,581 injuries. This is a uniquely American problem. It doesn't happen around the world; it is happening here. That is yet another reason for the American people to demand that we do our job in the Senate, in the House, and in the executive branch. If it is a uniquely American problem, Americans should try to solve it or at least get on the road to solving it.

I hope we would have a measure of satisfaction if we pass just one bill in 2019. Even if nothing else happens for years, maybe 25 years from now, we could prevent one school shooting, prevent just one shooting in a synagogue where 11 people lose their lives in a house of worship, prevent a school or

another place in our community from being unfortunately etched in that wall of tragedy and loss and horror forever, the name of a town, the name of a community remembered only in some cases because of the violence that took place there.

I will say it again. This is a uniquely American problem, and we have to try to solve it together. To say the status quo is unacceptable is a terrible understatement, but that is the truth. I think people understand that.

I know this is an issue people on both sides care very deeply about. We haven't come together yet to take very much action. If you look at the record on taking action on gun violence—I hate to use the word, but it is true—it is pathetic in terms of Federal action.

I am still hopeful that the American people will continue to demand more of all of us—both parties, both Houses, and two branches of the Federal Government coming together not just to mourn and to remember and to pay tribute and to offer prayers and condolences, but to take action, to do what Americans do when we are faced with a problem—take action, just as we did after 9/11. We didn't throw up our hands and say: This is just the new normal. We said: No, we are going to take action to try to stop it or at least reduce the likelihood. We can do the same on this issue of gun violence.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, this evening, I want to talk a little about the nexus of high prescription drug costs and the opioid epidemic that has gripped my State and our country—the No. 1 public health crisis in America today. It is a story of greed, frankly, and it is a story of the need for some fixes here in Congress to keep it from happening again.

With regard to the opioid crisis, I think the degree that this is affecting our communities is well documented. Some 72,000 Americans died last year of overdoses from drugs. This is the high water mark for our country. It is a grim statistic. More than two-thirds of those overdose deaths involve what is called opioids. This would be heroin, prescription drugs, and pain killers, and also the new synthetic opioids—the fentanyl, which is responsible for most of those opioid deaths.

I think we have made good progress over the past couple of years here in Congress in passing new legislation to help to address this problem—new innovative ways to get people into treatment and longer term recovery, which

we know works well in some instances—and also to do a better job on prevention and education.

So I do think those numbers will begin to turn around, but they haven't yet. They haven't yet. We have much more work to do. The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, which we passed, is starting to work. The Cures Act is starting to work. Most recently, the President signed legislation to try to reduce the cost of this synthetic opioid coming into our country, mostly from China, mostly through the U.S. mail system, based on research that we had done. That is called the STOP Act.

So, again, we are making some progress, but these overdose death rates are just unbelievably high, and it is a tragic situation, not just in my State, which is probably top three or four in the country, but throughout our Nation.

There is a miracle drug that can be used to reverse the effects of an overdose, and one reason we are beginning to see some progress in some regions of my State and around the country is that we are getting this drug out to more first responders and others who can, in effect, save people from an overdose. Then, of course, the trick is to get that person into treatment, and not to just have these overdoses continue to occur. That is where the more innovative programming is starting to make a difference. But I guess I could say that we have never in our history as a country had more of a need for this miracle drug to reduce the effects, to reverse the effect, of an overdose. It is called naloxone, and naloxone, again, is something that we are using more and more, and we are saving more and more lives.

I am going to talk this evening about a company that exploited the opioid epidemic by dramatically increasing the price of this naloxone drug by more than 600 percent just in the space of a few years.

The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which I chair alongside TOM CARPER, a Democrat from Delaware, conducted a year-long investigation—a bipartisan investigation, a really nonpartisan investigation—into this naloxone issue. We were concerned about the rising cost in order to find out why it was happening.

We focused on a pharmaceutical company called Kaleo and their naloxone auto-injector, called Evzio. While naloxone is available in generic form, two branded products exist for take-home use by untrained individuals in the case of an overdose. One is Adapt's nasal spray, called Narcan. You may have heard of that. Narcan is something that many first responders use and know about.

But the other one is this Evzio drug which is, again, the other branded naloxone product.

Narcan is available at a cost of about 125 bucks for two doses—\$125 for two doses.

Evzio, I thought, was an innovative product when it came out, and indeed,

it has some innovative aspects to it. A unit includes two auto-injectors and a training device that provides verbal instructions to talk the user through using the product.

Before Kaleo took Evzio to the market, industry experts, who were impressed with the product, said they should probably charge between \$250 and \$300 for this product. Again, it is miracle drug to reverse the effects of an overdose. They told the company they could “own the market” at that price of \$250 to \$300 a unit.

Instead, the company decided on charging a higher price, taking it to the market in October of 2014. So about 4 years ago they took it to the market for a price of \$575 per unit.

With sluggish sales—I think because the price was a little higher than, again, was advised—Kaleo could have lowered the price. Instead, the company went the other direction. It implemented a new distribution model proposed by an outside drug pricing consultant—who has installed similar distribution models at other pharmaceutical companies, by the way—and this involves dramatically raising the drug price.

Now, let me explain this. As part of the distribution model, Kaleo increased Evzio's price from \$575 per unit in 2014—again, October 2014—to \$3,750 in February of 2016, and then to its current price of \$4,100 in January of 2017.

So they started off a little high, had sluggish sales, and instead of going lower, they went from 575 bucks to \$4,100. That is a 600-percent increase over the space of about 2½ years—a 600-percent increase in this drug that is so needed right now in our communities.

Why did they do this? Well, according to company documents, the new distribution model for Evzio was designed to “capitalize on the opportunity of opioid overdose at epidemic levels.”

So, in effect, from the company's own documents, they chose to capitalize or exploit the opportunity of the opioid epidemic—this tragic epidemic that is killing more Americans than any other thing right now in my home State of Ohio and the No. 1 cause of death of Americans under the age of 50 in the entire country—72,000 is the number from last year of overdose deaths.

So as part of this new model the company worked to ensure that doctors' offices signed the paperwork indicating that Evzio was medically necessary.

Why is that important?

Well, this ensured government programs like Medicare and Medicaid—these are programs that, as you know, we already look at every year and think: Gosh, how do these costs keep going up? What do we do to maintain these important programs?

But they said they would increase the cost of this drug because they could get doctors to say that this was medically necessary, and that meant that these government programs—Medicare and Medicaid—would cover

the cost regardless of what the cost was, even though it had increased 600 percent in 2½ years.

So that was the concept behind this new distribution model. It relied on a portion of the prescriptions being filled by patients with commercial health plans that covered Evzio at the much higher cost—and it worked.

For people whose plans didn't cover Evzio or who didn't have insurance, Kaleo gave the drug to the patient for free. In these instances, the company incurred the roughly \$52 in cost of the goods. It was worth it because they could get these incredibly high prices from Medicare and Medicaid.

This distribution model worked, as I mentioned, when physicians deemed that Evzio was medically necessary. Then it would cover the cost—Medicare and Medicaid—all the way up to \$4,100 a unit.

Under this new model, Evzio fill rates jumped from 39 percent to 81 percent. So it worked. They sold more product. They made a killing, but at the expense of the U.S. taxpayer and at the expense of all of us, really.

The majority of Kaleo's initial revenue was from Medicare and Medicaid, and the resulting cost to the taxpayer to date has been about \$142 million, despite the fact that a much less costly alternative was readily available.

You will remember that for most of this time Narcan, this other product—not Evzio but Narcan—was available for \$125 for two doses.

So instead of following recommendations by drug pricing experts to take the product to market at that lower price, the company decided to exploit this loophole in our health insurance market and charge this much higher price to the American taxpayer through Medicare and Medicaid.

Our report from the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations was released on the same day that 60 Minutes aired a new story on Kaleo, its products, and why the price was so high. The findings of our report were used in that segment to highlight Kaleo's distribution model that transferred the cost of this drug, effectively, to American taxpayers. Now, you can see our report online at the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations' website. That PSI report and the 60 Minutes segment were both released on November 18.

Today, less than a month later, I am very pleased to tell you that Kaleo has publicly stated its plan to take steps toward now reducing the cost—the price—of its naloxone auto-injector from the current price of \$4,100 per unit down to \$178.

This is a very positive step forward, and I am hopeful that it will increase access to Naloxone—this critically important overdose reversal drug that has saved so many thousands of lives already. But I am also pleased that they made this change because it is going to save taxpayers a lot of money.

Make no mistake. I don't believe that this change would have occurred but

for our year-long investigation, the PSI report, and the 60 Minutes story shining a light on these incredibly high drug prices. Does anybody really believe that these prices would have been lowered if not for exposing it and the transparency that was then able to show what was happening?

So the bipartisan investigation has produced a good result, but we need to do a lot more.

The report includes recommendations to prevent similar situations moving forward. Among other things, the report recommends that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid, or CMS, should review its policies governing physicians' use of medical necessity exceptions for Part D in Medicare to prevent companies from inappropriately influencing prescribing. That is the least they should do.

While there are legitimate uses of the exception sometimes, we need to be sure it is not exploited, as it was in this case.

Congress should also require CMS to improve transparency regarding the total amount spent for drugs purchased by government healthcare programs so we can identify these problems early on and stop them.

To combat the underlying factors affecting addiction, of course, Congress has to do more here. We should put in place a 3-day limit, in my view, on prescription pain medication for acute pain—not for chronic pain, not for cancer, but for acute pain. That would make a huge difference.

By the way, it is consistent with the Centers for Disease Control recommendations requiring all States to utilize prescription monitoring programs—another thing we should do—and we should allocate more funding for immediate overdose remedies and first responder training.

There is reason to be optimistic, as I said earlier, about the direction our country is now headed in overcoming the opioid epidemic. We have committed ourselves here at the Federal Government to do more and to be better partners with State government and local government and non-profits. That is good, and I am proud of the work this Congress has done.

But the tragedy of overwhelming opioid overdoses has also created this opportunity for companies like Kaleo to exploit or, as they said, capitalize on this public health crisis. That is wrong. It is shameful.

I am proud of the investigative work we have done. I will continue to work in a bipartisan manner to do what we can to reduce prescription drug prices and also protect taxpayer-funded programs like Medicare and Medicaid.

Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO BOB CORKER

Mr. President, today on the floor the Senate voted on legislation dealing with Saudi Arabia; two issues, the death of journalist Khashoggi and also the ongoing and tragic war in Yemen.

You may have seen on the floor somebody who helped to orchestrate

this debate. I thought it was a healthy debate. I thought it was good. People offered amendments and had an opportunity to discuss their amendments and debate them in full.

I appreciate the fact that the Senate voted by an overwhelming margin and, in fact, by unanimous consent for a resolution that I think sends a very clear signal to Saudi Arabia and to other partners in the region and, frankly, to the Trump administration.

The person who was orchestrating this, you may have seen him down on the floor of the Senate, is the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. His name is BOB CORKER.

Senator CORKER is leaving after this week, assuming Congress is going to be out of session this week or next week. I think we will. He has chosen to retire, not to run for reelection. So come January, we will have another Senator from Tennessee who will be joining us, but BOB CORKER is going back into the private sector.

So today I want to talk a little bit about Chairman CORKER, the person you saw on the floor if you were watching earlier. He is a friend, but he is also a very valuable Member of the U.S. Senate.

The reason other people aren't on the floor talking about him right now is that he chose not to give a departure speech, which is unusual. Most Senators take to the floor and give a speech about their departure and their reflections on being here and what they might do in the future, and other Members come and talk about them. BOB CORKER, in his typical style, being a guy who is here for all the right reasons and that is not him—it is about others for him—said: I don't think I am going to give a departure speech.

So I don't think I will have a chance to talk about him as I have with other colleagues in their presence because he is not going to give that speech, but I will say, he deserves to have others like me talk about his record because he has had so many accomplishments.

He has been a leading voice in this body on so many important initiatives and issues. As chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on a global stage, of course, he has been active focusing on issues to improve the U.S. image around the world. Our diplomacy is something he believes in and has supported. He is concerned about the U.S. role in the world. He wants to be sure America continues to play a leading role on things like human rights, spreading democracy, and opening up channels of commerce.

He has also been very involved in budget issues, focusing on the debt, the deficit, and the problems we face in this country.

Finally, he has been active on other legislative matters. One that comes to mind is banking issues. He is on the Banking Committee and very involved in how to deal with Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae and, after the financial crisis, some of the issues that arose after

the great recession. So he has been very active as a legislator.

He also brings an interesting perspective to this place because to this day, he will tell you he is a businessperson, not a politician. He came up as a developer, a builder. He didn't come up through politics. He did become the mayor of Chattanooga, and that is how he got involved in the political world, but he has this business approach to things around here which I think is refreshing.

He also has the work ethic that comes with somebody from the private sector, and that is relentless. I see it on display every day, but I think it has been part of BOB's personality since he was a kid.

He started his first job at age 13. That was picking up trash and bagging ice. He started his own construction company at age 25. By the way, that construction company later expanded to 18 States—17 States in addition to his home State of Tennessee.

He first entered public service, not in a glamorous job, but having been successful in the private sector, he wanted to give back, and he was offered an opportunity to help his State. He said he wanted to be the Finance and Administration department director of Tennessee. Sort of like the budget person, and he was very helpful to the Governor and to the State of Tennessee in that role and then became mayor of Chattanooga, his hometown.

In 2006, he ran for Federal office for the first time, and that was for the U.S. Senate. He quickly rose to prominence as someone who again had expertise on some of the issues. That was after the housing crisis, so he was focused on that issue—the housing market crash and someone who advocated for conservative principles like reining in Federal spending and reducing the U.S. deficit.

In 2012, he was reelected to the Senate handily and has been chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for the past 4 years. I am a member of that committee, so I have had the opportunity to see his work up close and watched how he works patiently with Republicans and Democrats alike and focuses not just on sound bites and throwing out the rhetoric but on actually how do you get something done that helps our great country.

I can tell you with certainty that during Chairman CORKER's tenure before the Foreign Relations Committee, our allies around the world have benefited and our adversaries have been held accountable. That is his approach—pretty simple.

He has played a key role in helping restore America's leadership role in the world, and I am pleased the work was accomplished, combating Russia's continued aggression in Eastern Europe and standing up for our friend and ally, Israel, and for what we did today, sending a clear message on values.

Just recently, legislation he championed was called the BUILD Act, and

it was signed into law with the President without a lot of fanfare, but it is going to make a big difference in terms of helping our country and helping not just our image around the world but ensuring we are helping to bring other countries out of poverty by using U.S. market forces that work. It helps bring U.S. private sector investment to low-income countries around the world to reduce poverty, to grow investment. This is important in any context but certainly today with one of our competitors, China, trying to do the same thing. They are using another tactic—not the private sector but the public sector. It is a perfect example of the kind of impact BOB CORKER has had on this body.

He has built up international relationships and has bolstered our national security all at once. It was a pleasure working with him, and I wish him all the best.

He is a restless guy, so he is going to end up doing something else very creative with his life, I am sure, and I know he will enjoy spending more time with his wife, Elizabeth, of 30 years and their two daughters and grandchildren, but I am eager to see what BOB is going to do next. I know we will be hearing from him because his thirst for public service and helping others is just too great.

So to BOB CORKER, congratulations on a career of public service, and I hope you enjoy the next exciting chapter of your life.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KENNEDY). The Senator from Louisiana.

TRIBUTE TO CHARLES DAVIS AND DOUG CURTIS

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I rise to honor two people from my State and yours who served in World War II and are being celebrated in Northwest Louisiana—Charles Davis and Doug Curtis. Both are 92 years old.

Mr. Davis celebrates his 93rd birthday in 2 days, and so on the behalf of the Presiding Officer and certainly on my behalf, I wish him a happy birthday.

These American heroes are part of the “greatest generation.”

Mr. Davis joined the Navy when he was 16 years old, just after Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941. Imagine that—16 years old, leaving home, volunteering to face a world of danger to defend our country.

He bravely served 6 years at Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, Cape Esperance, and more. His courage was tested on numerous occasions. One example was when the ship on which he served was destroyed, leaving him and his fellow crew members stranded in the middle of the ocean, with only life vests to keep them alive for 37 hours. Charles said he spent a lot of time talking to God during those painful hours—particularly painful because his brother, serving on the same ship, did not live. Such a trying ordeal, a terrible loss.

When Charles talks about his life, he speaks with humility and gratitude

about his life experiences. He says he lived a great life, in no small part due to the great country we live in.

Asked how he remains always so positive, he says: Every morning, you can decide to have a good day or a bad day, and for him, he says, it is not a tough choice.

Mr. Doug Curtis served from January 1944 to August 1946, starting in Little Rock, AR. He deployed overseas to the Philippines and Japan, prepared to do whatever was needed, pledging patriotic duty to protect our country and the people he loved.

A special celebration is being thrown on December 14, tomorrow in Many, LA, to honor Charles and Doug. My office will present them both with American flags which have flown over this Capitol Building. It is a small gesture but meant to honor these two men and to celebrate their service and sacrifice.

I thank these great Louisiana heroes for their service to our country, and, Mr. President, I will convey your thanks as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

STIGLER ACT AMENDMENTS OF 2017

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 698, H.R. 2606.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2606) to amend the Act of August 4, 1947 (commonly known as the Stigler Act), with respect to restrictions applicable to Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Lankford amendment at the desk be agreed to, and the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The Lankford amendment (No. 4110) was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: To clarify certain provisions)

On page 3, line 9, strike “, as of said date,” and insert “, as of the date of enactment of the Stigler Act Amendments of 2018.”

At the end of the bill, add the following:

SEC. 5. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION PROVIDING FOR NO RETROACTIVITY.

Nothing in this Act, or the amendments made by this Act, shall be construed to revise or extend the restricted status of any lands under the Act of August 4, 1947 (61 Stat. 731, chapter 458) that lost restricted status under such Act before the date of enactment of this Act.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The bill (H.R. 2606), as amended, was passed.

LEECH LAKE BAND OF OJIBWE RESERVATION RESTORATION ACT

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 685, S. 2599.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2599) to provide for the transfer of certain Federal land in the State of Minnesota for the benefit of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Indian Affairs, with amendments, as follows:

(The parts of the bill intended to be stricken are shown in boldface brackets and the parts of the bill intended to be inserted are shown in italics.)

S. 2599

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Reservation Restoration Act”.

SEC. 2. LEECH LAKE BAND OF OJIBWE RESERVATION RESTORATION.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) the Federal land described in subsection (b)(1) was taken from members of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe during a period—

(A) beginning in 1948;

(B) during which the Bureau of Indian Affairs incorrectly interpreted an order of the Secretary of the Interior to mean that the Department of the Interior had the authority to sell tribal allotments without the consent of a majority of the rightful landowners; and

(C) ending in 1959, when the Secretary of the Interior was—

(i) advised that sales described in subparagraph (B) were illegal; and

(ii) ordered to cease conducting those sales;

(2) as a result of the Federal land described in subsection (b)(1) being taken from members of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe hold the smallest percentage of its original reservation lands of any Ojibwe bands in Minnesota;

[2](3)(A) the applicable statute of limitations prohibits individuals from pursuing through litigation the return of the land taken as described in paragraph (1); but

(B) a Federal judge ruled that the land could be restored to the affected individuals through the legislative process;

[3](4) a comprehensive review of the Federal land demonstrated that—

(A) **[a large portion of the Federal land is overloaded with] a portion of the Federal land is encumbered by—**

(i) utility easements;

(ii) rights-of-way for roads; and

(iii) flowage and reservoir rights; and

(B) there are no *known* cabins, campgrounds, lodges, or resorts located on any portion of the Federal land; and

[4](5) on reacquisition by the Tribe of the Federal land, the Tribe—

(A) has pledged to respect the easements, rights-of-way, and other rights described in paragraph **[3](4)(A)**; and