

House and Senate. While we didn't pass a bill coming out of that exercise, we did agree on several things that will allow us to avoid putting pressure on the end of the year that leads to these continuing resolutions and these omnibuses that are generating more and more debt.

The third thing is, we are done with Agencies' excess spending. This year, the Department of Defense has provided—the first ever in U.S. history—its own internal financial audit. There was a law written in 1981 that said this was required, but nobody has ever forced that to happen. Secretary Mattis and President Trump have forced that to happen. Over the next couple of years, we will be digesting exactly what they are finding in that internal audit. We can't get a turnaround if we don't know what is going on with the outflows, and that is exactly what we are doing in the Department of Defense.

So make this known, that President Trump says: Yes, we have increased spending to get our readiness back, to recap our military, and to develop the capability we need to protect this country. But at the same time, he is holding the Department of Defense accountable for every single red cent it spends, and the first step of that is this internal audit.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee and the Budget Committee—this is in the wheelhouse of those two committees, and I can state that every single member, Democratic and Republican, is interested in that audit and how it can make us much more productive and efficient in terms of how we spend taxpayer money.

The fourth is, after 8 years of arguing about the healthcare insurance plans for the individual market, which is about 21 million people, we need to start talking about the underlying cost drivers of our spiraling healthcare costs.

Lastly, the fifth and final thing we have to do to address this debt over the next 20 to 30 years is that we immediately have to save the Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid Programs for our recipients who need those benefits, but we also have to secure them for the future.

There are solutions out there. That is the good news today. The bad news is, yes, the spiraling debt is still with us. It is absolutely the No. 1 threat to our national security; there is no doubt about that. I believe that, and Secretary Mattis believes that. Prior Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that. We have to get the political will to face the American people and to tell us all that we have to have a plan over the next 20 or 30 years that will absolutely bring this back into reason.

One of my great colleagues in this body, a Democrat, Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE from Rhode Island, has an idea to go out in the future and pick a certain date, agree on the debt as a

percentage of GDP, and then move backwards with a guardrail plan on a roadmap to today to allow us to get there over time. I am in full support of that. He has been a big ally in this effort to rein in the debt and to develop a budget process that is sensible.

Mr. President, it is clear to me that after 4 years in this body, we have made some progress on this but not nearly enough. In 6 short years, one of our major trust funds, one of the major pillars of our social safety net system, the Medicare system—that trust fund goes to zero.

We deserve better than this. Democrats and Republicans both agree on that. What we have to do now is translate that into cooperation on this floor this next year; to talk about compromise, to find ways to get through the extreme positions this town and the media really encourage us to take.

Behind the scenes—behind that door right there—you know and I know we talk in a different way than we do when we are in front of the media. I believe, behind that door right there, lies the solutions to most of these problems, where we can be cooperative and find common solutions to these problems.

The last thing I will say is this. This country is not bankrupt. We have about \$130 trillion of future unfunded liabilities. If you just look at the next 30 years, that is true. Fortunately, though, on the other side of the balance sheet, we have some people estimate well more than \$250 trillion of assets.

The question is, Do we have the will to address the debt problem over some reasonable period of time using our assets and our productive capability to make this country stable and financially strong again? Not only do the citizens of the United States deserve this and need this, the rest of the world needs us. We are the most philanthropic country in the history of the world. Yet that is jeopardized by this intransigence that continues in this city.

I am an optimist, and I believe we will solve this. We have a good many new Members coming into this body next year—some great Members who are retiring—but it is time this moves up in our priority chain, where this is the No. 1 crisis that we begin to deal with.

I believe the best days of America are ahead because this problem has solutions, and we have plenty of resources to do it. It just depends on the political will.

Let me say this too. I believe, with a Democratic-controlled House, a Republican-controlled Senate, and a Republican in the White House, the American people have sent a message to Washington saying: OK, guys, it is time. This is one of the priorities.

We will see in this next year if the House decides to legislate or they decide to investigate.

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

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

#### RECESS

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the chair.

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 4:05 p.m., recessed until 6:09 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. YOUNG).

#### TRIBUTE TO ORRIN HATCH

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as a President pro tempore emeritus, I would like to recognize the retirement of the Senate's current President pro tempore, Senator ORRIN HATCH. Senator HATCH and I have both had the privilege of representing our constituents for more than four decades. He has fought for the interests of Utah and his constituents throughout his career.

Senator HATCH has shown a commitment to his beliefs. As both a chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee during my tenures in both posts, we have had more than one occasion to partner, to spar, and to share a laugh. Once we even exchanged ties. I gave him a Jerry Garcia one, and he gave me a Rush Limbaugh tie.

He will be remembered here in the Senate as a respected colleague.

I wish Senator HATCH, his wife, Elaine, their six children, and all his family the best.

#### TRIBUTE TO BILL NELSON

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Senator NELSON is the only Member of this body to see the Earth from space. Perhaps that is why he has been a champion of our environment, our climate, clean air and water, both here in the United States, and for the entire planet.

Senator NELSON has said that seeing our little planet suspended in the infinity of space imparted him "with a profound sense of obligation to become a better steward for our planet Earth." He has never shirked that obligation. Whether urgently warning about the dangers of a quickly warming planet or about the importance of conserving wildlife and our natural spaces, Senator NELSON has long understood that the health of our children and grandchildren depends on our responsible stewardship of our planet today. What is more, Senator NELSON understands that confronting climate change is not

only good for the planet but crucial for his constituents. Florida has already begun to feel the effects of extreme weather made worse by warmer temperatures, and Senator NELSON's work on the issue reflects his deep commitment to Floridians.

In addition to his global outlook, Senator NELSON has shown his willingness and ability to accomplish small changes that can have big benefits for his constituents. In the aftermath of horrific shootings in Florida, he didn't just offer condolences to the victims; he got to work to call attention to gun violence, and he issued calls to action. He partnered with me to introduce legislation that would give law enforcement agencies the tools they need to modernize efforts to combat gun violence. The small technical fix in this legislation—allowing the ATF to digitize its records—would make a world of difference to police trying to solve crimes across the country. I wish his calls to action, like so many of ours, were heard by Congress.

Senator NELSON has devoted his career to public service, and his role in elected office started back in the Florida House of Representatives in 1972. Since then, he has faithfully represented the State of Florida, and we have been fortunate to have him here in the Senate. I am sad to see him go, and the Nation will miss his strong voice on environmental issues. I wish Senator NELSON and his wife, Grace, the best.

#### TRIBUTE TO BOB CORKER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, BOB CORKER is a businessman. He is a husband, a father, and a grandfather. He is a U.S. Senator. But at his heart, he is a Tennessean.

Senator CORKER's success in business has translated into a successful Senate career. In these uncertain times, where diplomacy sometimes seems reduced to a tweet or a hashtag, Senator CORKER has shown a willingness to refuse to compromise American values for political expediency. Most recently, I was proud to join him and other Senators in sending a letter that triggered an investigation under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act to determine if Saudi officials are responsible for the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Senator CORKER also recognizes that reducing nuclear weapon stockpiles is an important step to a more peaceful world, and he was just one of 13 Republicans to vote for the New START treaty.

I thank Senator CORKER for his service here in the Senate and wish him and his wife, Elizabeth, well.

#### TRIBUTE TO CLAIRE MCCASKILL

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Senator MCCASKILL has left an indelible mark on the Senate. A former prosecutor in Missouri, she brought the fight to pro-

tect the most vulnerable in her State and across the country to her work here in the U.S. Senate.

Her work to preserve the Affordable Care Act and protect victims of sexual harassment and violence speak to the depth of her convictions. She has also shown great talent safeguarding our Nation and holding our government accountable as a former chair of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and as a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Senator MCCASKILL has fought hard to protect college students from sexual harassment and assault on campus. Senator MCCASKILL has even spoken of the sexual harassment that she herself faced as a young woman in the Missouri State Legislature. Long before the Nation began talking openly about the extent of sexual harassment and assault across all sectors of our society brought into the open by the #MeToo movement, Senator MCCASKILL prepared a report on the extent of sexual harassment and assault on college campuses. But Senator MCCASKILL has never been a woman content with report-writing; she introduced a bill to help address the issue. And when the Senate didn't move on that bill, she worked directly with colleges, holding public roundtables to call attention to the issue.

That is a just a glimpse of the determination that Senator MCCASKILL brings to all of her work on behalf of her constituents. She is a straight shooter. In the face of misinformation campaigns about the Affordable Care Act, Senator MCCASKILL has always stepped up to promote the truth. I have always admired her commitment to preserving that law that helps so many of her rural constituents.

As a former chair of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator MCCASKILL has dedicated much of her Senate service to keeping our country safe. I greatly appreciated her support for my National Guard Empowerment Act, which finally gave our National Guard the tools it needs to protect our Nation and take care of its members.

I will miss Senator MCCASKILL's tenacity, and I am sure that Missouri and the Nation will too. Missouri is losing a champion in the Senate. Marcelle and I wish her, her husband, Joe, and her family the very best in this new chapter.

#### TRIBUTE TO DEAN HELLER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Senator DEAN HELLER may have been a freshman Senator when he came to this body in 2011, but he was not short on experience. First elected as a Nevada assemblyman in 1990, Senator HELLER has served in government ever since.

During his Senate tenure, Senator HELLER has shown a great interest in

protecting American's data privacy, and he was an important partner in our efforts to pass the USA FREEDOM Act. He was a staunch advocate of that bill, even when many in the Senate were pushing for expanded surveillance powers over Americans. Both of us recognized that though the bill may not have included every provision we wanted, the best way to offer privacy protections was through compromise.

While his tenure here was brief, I have appreciated getting to know Senator HELLER and working with him on issues of great importance. I wish Senator HELLER, his wonderful wife, Lynn, and their four children the very best in this next chapter of their lives.

#### TRIBUTE TO JEFF FLAKE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I know that Senator JEFF FLAKE believes, as I do, that the Senate at its best can be the conscience of our Nation. Lately, I believe the Senate has been less than that. In the closing months of his tenure in the Senate, however, Senator FLAKE has spoken about his hopes for this body and for our Nation. What is more, throughout his tenure, he has on many occasions reached across the aisle to bridge the partisan divide for the good of the Nation.

When I first approached Senator FLAKE about joining me in visiting Cuba, he was willing to come with an open mind. He recognized the failure of the continuing U.S. embargo, and his partnership helped us create a new path forward that culminated in the release of Alan Gross, an American long imprisoned in Cuba, and restored diplomatic relations between our two countries. The few minutes on the tarmac in Cuba while we waited to bring Mr. Gross back home after 5 years in captivity are some of the most meaningful minutes of my life. Senator FLAKE's partnership helped lead to that moment.

While the release of Alan Gross was the most dramatic event in U.S.-Cuban relations in a generation, Senator FLAKE has also partnered with me on initiatives to encourage Cuban entrepreneurs, open Cuban markets to American farmers and agriculture, and boost the Cuban Government's respect for human rights. His assistance from across the aisle has been helpful in shining light on the more than 50 years of failed policy toward this small island neighbor.

I have also watched with admiration JEFF's commitment of the last month in protecting one of the most pivotal national security investigations in our Nation's history—the special counsel's investigation into Russian interference in our elections. The security and sanctity of our elections is a cornerstone of our democracy. As he rounds out this chapter of his career, Senator FLAKE's stance and insistence that the Senate act to protect the work of the special counsel has been laudable.

I will be sad to see Senator FLAKE leave, and the Senate will be losing an