

that. Our roads and bridges are crumbling, generally, not just at our parks. We need an infrastructure bill. Maybe the parks bill will be the start of that. We will see if that can be something where we can find compromise.

Of course, we also have to make progress on healthcare. The costs of healthcare are out of control. I know Senator ALEXANDER talked about this earlier on the floor today, but there are so many opportunities for us to improve our healthcare system and the cost and the quality of that system. It is something that has been very difficult and very partisan. It has been difficult for us to make any progress on that, but I think we have to put our partisan blinders away and say: How can we come up with sensible solutions? Some have talked about it today on the floor. Senator COLLINS, who was here earlier today as Presiding Officer, has specific legislation to have these high-risk pools in States—it has worked in her State of Maine, and it can work nationally—to be sure that we are reducing the cost for everybody for their premiums, deductibles, and copays.

I think the American people are looking for wins right now. I think it would help our country to have some of these wins. I think there are some great examples I have presented today of some pretty easy wins, of some low-hanging fruit—whether it is dealing with these issues that we are left with here with the government shutdown, making some small steps forward on immigration reform right away, or whether it is low-hanging fruit like the reform of the Internal Revenue Service, the retirement savings expansion, so people can save more for retirement, and this idea that we can begin to turn the tide on the opioid epidemic, which has gripped our country. It doesn't have to be a year of gridlock. It can be a year of progress.

My hope is that on this opening day, as Members are walking down the aisle and are here with their families and celebrating and the optimism of opening day and thinking that hope springs eternal, this can be a good season. This can be a good year. This can be a year where we focus on what is best for the people we represent and focus on what is best for our country. If we do that, I think we will make a difference, and I think we will look back and realize that it doesn't have to be this way.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CAPITO). The majority whip.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, as we begin a new Congress, it is always an exciting time. There are a lot of families and friends here. Our Members and colleagues were sworn in earlier today. It represents a new beginning—obviously, a time when there is hope and optimism that we can come together

and do some good things for the people we represent in our respective States and for our country. That is the way we approach this new session of Congress.

There is a lot I think we can do. We can find some common ground and work together. Obviously, we have to deal with the issues of last year's business before we can start this business of this new year.

Last year's business is incomplete. We are almost 2 weeks into a partial government shutdown because Democrats don't want to fund increased security for the border. Border security is a national security requirement. Every Member of Congress, Democrat or Republican, should take seriously our responsibility to protect our Nation by ensuring that our borders are secure. At one time Democrats understood that.

In 2006, the Democratic leader and the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee voted for legislation to authorize a border fence. They were joined in that vote by then-Senators Biden, Clinton, and Obama. In 2013, every Senate Democrat supported legislation requiring the completion of a 700-mile fence along our southern border. This legislation would have provided \$46 billion for border security and \$8 billion specifically for the wall.

Nearly every Senate Democrat supported \$25 billion in border security funding just last February—just recently, less than 1 year ago. Yet today, Democrats would rather keep part of the government shut down than provide the money needed to secure our borders. The question is, What has changed?

Our national security situation certainly hasn't changed. Our borders are not sufficiently secure, and as we have seen, they are a target for illegal entry. Over the past year, illegal border crossing apprehensions have shot up by more than 30 percent. The holes in our border security leave us susceptible to illegal entry by gang members, human traffickers, drug dealers, terrorists, and weapons traffickers. The Democrats are refusing to budge on sorely needed border security funding. Why? I think that is a fair question.

It is, I think, because Democrats are reluctant to oppose the far-left wing of their party, which increasingly seems to be advancing this preposterous notion that we really don't need to secure our borders at all. Every nation has to secure its borders. A country without borders really isn't a country. Preventing dangerous individuals and goods from entering is an essential part of every country's security, and as my Democratic colleagues have proved in the past, they know this, which is why they voted that way in previous sessions of Congress, as recently as last year.

I hope they will think better of this government shutdown and decide that their national security obligations are more important than catering to the

far-left wing of their party. It is time to fund our border security and to end this shutdown. It simply requires sides to come together to find that common ground and to do what is in our country's best interests and the best interests of the American people; that is, to make sure that our country has a secure border and that we discourage people from coming here illegally and encourage them to come through legal means.

I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago in my State of South Dakota to welcome into our State and country 99 new citizens from 33 countries around the world. They came here the legal way. They went through the process and followed our rules, followed our laws. That is what we want to encourage more of.

What we don't need more of are people coming into this country illegally and presenting the types of threats I mentioned earlier—anytime we have that many people, in a mass way, migrating across our border. I hope and sincerely believe that as a Congress, as a Senate working with this President—who has made this a big priority for his administration—it is an important priority for our country and a requirement and obligation that I think we all have as U.S. Senators, first and foremost, to protect our country and to protect the American people. If we don't get that right, the rest is really just conversation.

I hope the Democrats will come to the conclusion that their statements in the past and their votes in the past in support of border security are the right way to proceed and will continue in that tradition we have had in the country in the past in which, on these important issues, both sides come together and work to find common ground.

I yield the floor.

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

TRIBUTE TO MICKEY MILLER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this month my friend Mickey Miller will retire from Nolin Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation, Nolin RECC, after 45 years at the organization, including more than a quarter century as its president and CEO. Mickey has dedicated his career to providing reliable, cost-effective energy services to Kentuckians in nine counties with integrity and innovation. I would like to take a moment to reflect on his remarkable career in our Commonwealth.

From LaRue County, Mickey graduated from the University of Kentucky with a degree in agriculture economics and marketing. During his time at Nolin RECC, Mickey has championed a great deal of growth and advancement. In fact, the cooperative's membership has more than tripled, providing vital services to Kentucky families and employers and fueling development in the region.

Mickey's contributions extend beyond his work with Nolin RECC. As the chairman of the Kentucky Council of Cooperatives and the director of the Kentucky Association of Electric Cooperatives, Mickey has been a strong advocate for affordable and reliable electricity programs throughout the Commonwealth. He also has served on the board of the United Utility Supply Cooperative, providing for the needs of communities across 19 States. Previously, Mickey led energy cooperatives throughout the Nation as the chairman of Touchstone Energy.

In addition to his many business successes, Mickey has also committed himself to the betterment of his community. As an executive board member of the Lincoln Heritage Council of the Boy Scouts of America, Mickey is dedicated to helping prepare the next generation to excel. He also worked to encourage economic growth in his community through his involvement with the Elizabethtown—Hardin County Industrial Foundation.

I would like to particularly recognize one part of Mickey's work for his community: saluting our Nation's veterans. Supporting the Honor Flight Kentucky program, Nolin RECC, under Mickey's leadership, along with other Kentucky cooperatives, enabled 43 World War II, Korea, and Vietnam veterans to travel to Washington, DC, last year to see the memorials built to honor their service. I am grateful for the work of Honor Flight Kentucky, which gives many veterans their only chance to visit our Nation's Capital, and I applaud the efforts of community leaders like Mickey for making these trips a possibility for our heroes.

Given Mickey's dedication to these many causes and his passion for rural communities, it is no wonder that he has been honored with several awards recognizing his service to many of these organizations. From the Touchstone Energy Distinguished Service Award to the Boy Scout Hardin County Distinguished Citizen Award, Mickey is widely praised for his professional accomplishments and his service to his community.

Although I am sure everyone at Nolin RECC is sorry to see him go, I know they will join me in thanking Mickey for his many years of dedicated service to Kentucky's rural communities. I wish him a relaxing retirement with his wife of 46 years, Barbara, his daughters, Jennifer and Carmen, and his grandsons, Craig and Mason. I encourage my Senate colleagues to help me congratulate Mickey Miller on a remarkable career of service to Nolin RECC.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO GAVIN GEE

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Gavin Gee, director of the Idaho Department of Finance,

who announced his retirement after over four decades of distinguished service to the State.

Gavin has led an impressive career in the banking sector, dedicating the majority of his life to promoting access to vigorous, healthy, and comprehensive financial services for Idaho citizens. He began his career at the Idaho Department of Finance in 1977 and has served as the department's director since 1996 after a short stint as its acting director in 1995. Impressively, in a post that requires Gubernatorial appointment, as well as the advice and consent of the State senate, Gavin has served under four different Governors.

Prior to being acting director, he served the department in a number of other roles, including as the department's deputy attorney general, securities bureau chief, and financial institutions bureau chief. He also served as chairman and a member of the State Liaison Committee of the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council between 1994 and 1999 and as chairman and on the boards of directors of both the Conference of State Bank Supervisors and the National Association of State Credit Union Supervisors.

Throughout his career, Gavin has fought to ensure the financial interests of Idaho citizens are effectively served. He has also championed policies and enforced laws to protect Idaho's citizens from fraud, unsafe practices, and unlawful conduct. He is a leading figure in community banking, widely respected by those in the industry and those with whom he works.

In addition to his service at the State level, Gavin has contributed meaningfully to the national dialogue on financial services supervision and regulation. He was instrumental in the development of the Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System and Registry, improving supervision of the mortgage industry and enhancing consumer protection. From 2006 to 2012, he served as chairman of the CSBS/American Association of Residential Mortgage Regulators State Regulatory Registry, the board which oversees the development and operation of the System. He has worked closely with Congress on regulatory relief efforts, counseling lawmakers on the Financial Services Regulatory Relief Act of 2006 and then again on the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief and Consumer Protection Act in 2018. On several occasions, Gavin lent his expertise in testimony before the Senate Banking Committee. We have enjoyed a close working relationship, and I am grateful for his willingness to engage and educate lawmakers. Gavin has been a real asset to the State of Idaho and the Nation, and I consider him a good friend. I appreciate his lifetime of service and wish him well in retirement.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to

the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 4:52 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has agreed to H. Res. 1, resolving that Karen L. Haas of the State of Maryland, be, and is hereby, chosen Clerk of the House of Representatives; that Paul D. Irving of the State of Florida be, and is hereby, chosen Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives; that Philip George Kiko of the State of Ohio be, and is hereby, chosen Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives; and that Father Patrick J. Conroy of the State of Oregon be, and is hereby, chosen Chaplain of the House of Representatives.

The message further announced that the House has agreed to H. Res. 2, resolving that the Senate be informed that a quorum of the House of Representatives has assembled; that NANCY PELOSI, a Representative from the State of California, has been elected Speaker; and that Karen L. Haas, a citizen of the State of Maryland, has been elected Clerk of the House of Representatives of the One Hundred Sixteenth Congress.

The message also announced that pursuant to House Resolution 3, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to join a committee on the part of the Senate to notify the President of the United States that a quorum of each House has assembled and that Congress is ready to receive any communication that he may be pleased to make: Mr. HOYER of Maryland and Mr. MCCARTHY of California.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bills were read the first time:

S. 1. A bill to make improvements to certain defense and security assistance provisions and to authorize the appropriation of funds to Israel, to reauthorize the United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Act of 2015, and to halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people, and for other purposes.

S. 21. A bill making continuing appropriations for Coast Guard pay in the event an appropriations act expires prior to the enactment of a new appropriations act.

S. 24. A bill to provide for compensation of Federal and other government employees affected by lapses in appropriations.