

I did see, just before I came over here, that the administration has said that we are going to extend it. We are going to make sure that SNAP benefits are paid in February. Again, that is great and sounds wonderful, but it is a bandaid. Sooner or later, if we don't end up doing something about this shutdown, that bandaid is going to be ripped off, and these folks are going to be left in the cold once again.

We need to remember—and I think this gets lost sometimes in the talk about this shutdown—that this is not just about the paychecks and the direct benefits that people in this country receive from the Federal Government. It also affects all of those people in our communities who serve those who work for the government—those who take in their grocery money and take in their utility money and take in their gas money. It is going to affect those people. It is going to affect car dealers, and it is going to affect local businesses. It is just like the folks at the prison in Aliceville said today, which is that sooner or later, if they don't have money to spend around Aliceville, it is going to affect that community. This touches so many people in this country that we need not lose sight of that.

The letters and calls and voice mails are pouring in every day as this shutdown continues. More and more Americans face the increasing consequences of the impasse that we see here in Washington, DC. There is, simply put, no excuse for it. We can and must do better. We can and must find the common ground that so many of us talk about. Every day, over and over, we talk about finding common ground, but we have to practice what we preach in terms of finding that common ground.

This past year, I talked to a number of my constituents back home who had gone through a number of issues. I talked to a lot of people who asked me to support the wall. They stopped me over the holidays, and I would always stop and talk to them. They were always very respectful, unlike with some things that happen in our political discourse today. These people were always very respectful, and we had nice conversations. When I asked them what they were talking about, they said that I needed to vote for a wall.

They said: We just need border security, Senator. We need border security.

This gave me the opportunity to say: I completely agree.

Unfortunately, the so-called “wall” that we keep hearing about, primarily on Twitter, has really become just a metaphor to support a secure border. To oppose it is to oppose a secure border. That makes no sense. What is getting lost in this debate is that every Member of this body wants secure borders. Every Member of this body and every Member of the House wants border security measures that will keep our communities safe. We might have disagreements about the best way to make sure our borders are secure, and

we might have disagreements on what border security will look like, but it doesn't mean that we want open borders as I keep hearing from the administration. That is a preposterous statement.

In fact, in the last Congress, we had one of the President's nominees before us for the head of ICE. He used to work on the border. He was there. He controlled it. He was the head of border security.

I asked him in the hearing: Have you ever heard one politician—have you ever heard anybody in Washington, DC—say that he is for open borders?

He said: No, sir, not at all.

We have to get away from that political posturing so that we can find the common ground that is necessary to move this forward. The fact of the matter is that we have found common ground. We have found that common ground right here in this body.

Last February, in the midst of bipartisan talks on more comprehensive immigration reform, a number of senior administration officials came to the Senate and briefed Members on the situation at the border. They outlined how an infusion of money in the context of a larger piece of legislation could improve security and conditions for asylum seekers and on the border. In the wake of that presentation—if I recall correctly, they proposed a \$25 billion price tag for border security—Republicans and Democrats alike, which was a majority of the U.S. Senate, voted to include that \$25 billion in border security funding over the next decade. That was a bipartisan effort.

Over the course of the last spring and early summer, the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee—led by my colleague from Alabama, Senator SHELBY, and by Senator LEAHY, the ranking member—passed a bipartisan Homeland Security funding bill by a vote of 25 to 5. It did that in June of this year. It included \$1.6 billion in border security funding, which was on top of the \$1.3 billion, I think, that was funded last year. What has started this whole process today is the administration's demand of a blank check of \$5.6 billion for a wall as the price to reopen the government. That is, simply, not how our government should work.

Now, candidly and in all fairness, in recent days, we have gone from an argument that was just, simply, about dollars and cents on both sides of the aisle—5.6 versus 1.6 or 1.3—to where we have now seen the administration begin to slowly roll out how it would actually spend that money. There was no plan in the beginning. It was just “send us \$5.6 billion.” We are learning about that plan via Twitter and on the TV talk shows, not the way this body is used to getting information from the administration—through a budget process or through some proposal about which you can ask questions and can vet.

If the administration is serious about border security—and it should be seri-

ous about border security, just like the Senate of the United States and the House of Representatives of the United States should be serious about border security—we should reopen the rest of the government. Officials should also come back to the Hill, like they did in February, and brief Members of both parties in Congress about what is needed and of exactly the new border security money and how it will be spent.

This week, the House has been voting on a series—or will be voting on a series—of funding bills that the Senate has already passed, many by a vote of 92 to 6. Think about that. As I travel around the State, I tell people all the time what I saw last year—my first year—which is that there is so much more bipartisanship in this body that you don't see just by watching C-SPAN and listening to dueling press conferences. There is a lot of it that goes on, and we passed those bills by 92 to 6.

These bills will ensure that the Federal employees and contractors can go back to work and can get paid, that food assistance and housing vouchers can go forward, that vital research can be done, that our parks and museums can reopen, that our airports are safe, and that our prisons are monitored. Instead of handing political appointees a 10-percent raise, it will ensure that we will pay the Coast Guard, whose members continue to serve throughout this shutdown without knowing if their next paychecks are going to come.

I am literally sad to say—and I really hope people will take this into account, especially the folks who have been here for a long time—that in my first year here, my first year in the Senate, this is the third government shutdown that we have seen. We should be embarrassed about that, and the administration should be embarrassed about that. At every opportunity, I have voted to keep the government open. I can't say that I would do it every time, because it will depend on the circumstances, but, thus far, I have done all I can to keep this government open.

The American people are frustrated and disheartened by the dysfunction and empty rhetoric that they hear out of this town, but we have to remember that the Senate of the United States has done its job and done so in a deliberative and bipartisan way. No one on either side of the political aisle should lose sight of that.

We came together and found common ground, and we should insist that the President of the United States not only acknowledge that but honor that, get this government up and running, and let's sit down to continue to discuss the plans for the border security that we all know is necessary and we would like.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO BILL CUNNINGHAM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on February 1, the Kentucky Supreme

Court will bid farewell to a towering figure in our State's judiciary, Justice Bill Cunningham. A Lyon County native, Bill announced he would retire from the high court at the beginning of next month, bringing to a close a career of public service that has spanned more than half of his life. I would like to take a moment to join his colleagues, his family, and his community in western Kentucky in congratulating Bill on this remarkable milestone and to thank him for his service to the Commonwealth.

Bill first answered the call to service early in his life. Once he graduated from Murray State University and the University of Kentucky College of Law, Bill enlisted in the Army, nobly serving our Nation in uniform in Vietnam, Korea, and Germany. Upon his return to Kentucky, Bill decided to put his legal education to work for the men and women of his community. For the last 45 years, he has done just that.

Working in various courtrooms as the Eddyville City attorney, public defender for the Kentucky State Penitentiary, and the 56th judicial district's Commonwealth's attorney, Bill earned the esteem of his colleagues. In fact, his peers voted him the "Outstanding Commonwealth's Attorney for Kentucky."

Beginning in 1991, Bill moved to the other side of the bench when he was first elected as a circuit court judge in western Kentucky, serving in Caldwell, Livingston, Lyon, and Trigg Counties. He was then elected to the Kentucky Supreme Court in 2006. On the high court, Bill represents 24 counties in western Kentucky. His constituents rewarded Bill's accomplished service by reelecting him to a second term in 2014.

In addition to his dedicated leadership in our Commonwealth's legal system, Bill has written six books on Kentucky history and is a frequent contributor to local newspapers. He is also known as a captivating speaker, and I hope he will continue to share his perspective with audiences even in retirement.

As Bill's tenure on the Kentucky Supreme Court comes to a close, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for his lifetime of service to his community, our Commonwealth, and our country. In retirement, Bill said he looks forward to spending more time with his wife Paula, their five children, and their 15 grandchildren. I extend my best wishes to the entire Cunningham family, and I ask my Senate colleagues to help me congratulate Justice Bill Cunningham for his service to Kentucky.

Mr. President, the Paducah Sun recently published a column congratulating Bill on his retirement. I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Paducah Sun, Dec. 30, 2018]

JUSTICE SERVED

(By Joshua Robert)

Often loquacious and poignant, Kentucky Supreme Court Justice Bill Cunningham struggled Thursday to find the right words summarizing the coming sunset to his career, emotion seeping through his typically laid-back demeanor.

"I'm just very grateful—I'm trying to say this without getting choked up here—to the Almighty for giving me the strength to (serve the public)," the justice told a Sun reporter. "I'm so grateful for the people of west Kentucky for giving me this wonderful opportunity."

That Cunningham, a state Supreme Court justice for 12 years, paired his deity with the residents of his native and beloved western Kentucky is not surprising, nor is the affection one-way.

The judge, folksy and often dressed in his trademark seersucker suit, cuts a popular figure. An accomplished jurist, engaging orator and celebrated author, Cunningham is as Kentucky as they come, though in our opinion, uncommon in the commonwealth.

Cunningham, 74, of Kuttawa, announced Thursday that he'll be leaving the Supreme Court on Feb. 1, ending a career in public service that's spanned more than half his life. He considered his exit from the high court for more than a year and was unsettled by the prospect of leaving halfway through his second term.

But the "constant bombardment of human woe and suffering" he's seen and heard from the bench proved too much to continue. The judge, who felt compelled by duty, did what good judges are supposed to—he cast aside personal feelings to make the wisest decision possible, his self-assessment unsparing that he's not at his best.

"You've got to be emotionally strong to continue," Cunningham said, "and I'm just worn out with it."

The judge said he doesn't know what he'll do next, but it'll be something of service to the people of western Kentucky.

"I'm going to stay engaged," he said. "I'm going to take a couple of months off to get my perspective, then I'm going to do what other people do when they're out of a job—I'm going to look for one."

"I'd like to be able to serve in some capacity. I just don't know what that is right now."

Running again for public office, like for a state legislative seat, is unlikely. "I'm a dinosaur, and much of the political mainstream today has passed me by," he said in his self-effacing manner.

We've gotten to know Cunningham over the years, covering the justice's speeches and appearances and publishing his thoughtful, well-written guest opinion pieces from time to time. If we're coming off as an admirer, it's because we are, unapologetically so.

We've found Justice Cunningham has admirable traits like modesty, kindness, intelligence, fairness and loyalty, rare virtues among today's public servants. His replacement will come from one of the 24 counties within the First Supreme Court District, but in truth, it'll be impossible to replace Cunningham and all he has meant to our communities.

"There's some great timber out there, so they'll probably get a better justice than what they have now," he said of the judicial nominating process. With respect to the judge, that's a dubious claim.

Cunningham is slated to be the guest speaker Feb. 5 during a Paducah Lions Club meeting at Walker Hall.

"I'll be a former judge by then, so that's if they don't cancel the invitation," he joked.

We have no doubt the invitation's still good and his speech will be captivating, as always. After all, jobs and titles may change, but character doesn't.

TRIBUTE TO DEAN JOHNSON

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, last month marked the end of a distinguished career for Laurel County clerk Dean Johnson. Dean recently retired after 37 years of public service to his community, our Commonwealth, and this country. Today I would like to take a moment to reflect on my friend's many contributions to Laurel County and to thank him for his dedication to Kentucky.

First drawn to public service at a young age through organizations like the Key Club and the Future Farmers of America, Dean spent his career focused on integrity and efficiency. After serving in the Armed Forces and for 4 years as the county's treasurer, Dean was elected Laurel County clerk in 1985. His leadership has brought substantial innovation and development to this eastern Kentucky community.

In my State, a county clerk is responsible for providing a broad range of services to Kentuckians, including everything from voter registration and election management to licensing and recordkeeping. During Dean's tenure, the Laurel County clerk's office introduced new infrastructure and implemented new procedures to better serve a growing population. Running an election has changed quite a bit in Laurel County since Dean entered office, but his dedication has helped promote access to the ballot box for more than 44,000 registered voters.

In addition to his work in Laurel County, Dean collaborated with his peers to share best practices in the Kentucky County Clerks' Association. Earning both their trust and respect, he served a term as the organization's president, helping deliver essential services across Kentucky. Like other county clerks, Dean supported his fellow veterans by repurposing license plates into birdhouses. The products are sold with proceeds benefiting our Commonwealth's veterans.

Over the years, I have enjoyed working with Dean on behalf of our constituents, and I am proud to salute this man of great accomplishment. In his retirement, Dean plans to do more of what he loves most: spending time with his daughter, Teresa, and his granddaughter, Rebecca. He will also continue to oversee his 175-acre cattle farm. As he begins this next chapter, I would like to wish him the very best, and I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in thanking Laurel County clerk Dean Johnson for his decades-long service of our State.

Mr. President, the Sentinel-Echo in London recently published a profile of Dean's accomplished career. I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

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