

It would create new pathways to hold accountable the individuals and institutions that have tortured and murdered countless Syrian civilians over the course of the civil war. It would ensure that unless the Syrian regime shifts course and ends its brutality, the nation's major industries and financial institutions would pay a heavy price due to American sanctions.

So if it weren't obvious, these are critically important issues, and none of them have been put on pause because the Democrats' political strategy has blocked this body from taking action.

Due to the Democrats' filibuster, Israel, Jordan, and the innocent people of Syria have already had to wait 24 days for the Senate to proceed to these largely noncontroversial and widely supported bipartisan bills.

I hope our colleagues across the aisle don't keep them waiting much longer.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST ACT OF 2019—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the consideration of 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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as the dust settles from the longest shutdown in American history, we have work to do to get our country back on track. Hundreds of thousands of Federal workers who endured a month without compensation need to get their pay-

checks and backpay as soon as possible. So I have written a letter to President Trump urging him to expedite the delivery of those paychecks.

At the same time, we must be mindful of the hardships that persist for Federal contractors, who may not receive the backpay they have missed and who may have lost health insurance during the shutdown. We need to find a solution as well for those contractors. Senator SMITH of Minnesota is working on that, and I hope we can do something to help them. It is of no fault of their own that they lost pay.

But there are some costs from the Trump shutdown that cannot be recouped. The CBO today released a report about the lasting damage that the Trump shutdown has done to the American economy. According to the CBO, the 5-week shutdown cost the U.S. economy \$11 billion overall, including \$3 billion in economic activity that can never be recovered.

Let me repeat that. The Trump shutdown has cost the U.S. economy \$11 billion. What a devastating and pointless exercise this has been. If President Trump didn't appreciate the error of his ways already, his CBO ought to set him straight—no more shutdowns. They accomplish nothing. They only inflict pain and suffering on the country, our citizens, our economy, and our national security. That is a lesson we all must keep in mind.

The continuing resolution we passed on Friday only runs until February 15. In 3 weeks, we must pass additional appropriations to avoid another shutdown. Let the CBO report be a dire warning to President Trump and my Republican colleagues in the Senate against shutting down the government again.

Now, in these next 3 weeks, House and Senate appropriators named to the conference committee on Department of Homeland Security will endeavor to strike a bipartisan deal on border security. The good news is that we begin this process with plenty of common ground. Democrats and Republicans alike agree on the need for stronger border security. Though Democrats sharply disagree with the President on the need for an expensive and ineffective border wall, we agree on the need to strengthen our ports of entry, as well as the need to provide more drug inspection technology and humanitarian assistance. Since so many of the drugs come through the portals, a border wall will do no good at all, but strengthening those portals is vital.

Because we have set this up as a conference, Democratic and Republican leadership—House and Senate—will be involved, as well as the appropriators from those committees. Everyone has skin in the game. So in the next 3 weeks, the goal of the committee should be to find areas where we agree and work on them together.

In the past, when the President has stayed out of it, when the President has given Congress room, we have been

repeatedly able to forge bipartisan agreements, including two budget agreements and the Russia sanctions. When the President injects maximalist partisan demands into the process, negotiations tend to fall apart. The President should allow the conference committee to proceed with good faith negotiations. I genuinely hope it will produce something that is good for the country and acceptable to both sides.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, after a 35-day government shutdown, more than 800,000 Federal workers and their families are finally back at work. Their families have endured unnecessary and needless hardship over the past several weeks because, frankly, the Speaker of the House, Ms. PELOSI, was more determined to try to win the political battle than solve the problem. I could give the same comment to our friend the Democratic leader here in the Senate. I hope now, after we have been through this exercise in futility, that our colleagues will take seriously our responsibility to solve the problem before us, and that is to reach an agreement so we don't end up in the same position 3 weeks hence when this continuing resolution expires.

I tell people that we solve problems like this every single day here in the Congress. You don't read about it, necessarily, or hear about it because when we build consensus and negotiate compromises, it is not news. The only time it is news is when we disagree and when it is broadcast across cable TV or the subject of talk radio or social media.

It is unfortunate that dedicated public servants were caught in the cross-hairs over a partisan fight on border security. What we have seen over the last months is that many Members desire to score those political points and win a fight against the President, and that desire is much greater than their desire to build legislation that benefits the American people.

There is a solution to be had. As I said, we do it every day. The only question is, Are we willing to work together to find it? I know I am.

I have been speaking with many Members of the Texas delegation, both Republicans and Democrats, to try to find that common ground for our constituents for border security. We don't consider these to be political footballs or talking points; we consider these matters to be part of their daily lives and part of our responsibility as their elected representatives.

In the last few days, I have had the chance to be in Dallas, TX, and also in

Austin, TX. I was in Austin, TX, to talk about the CyberTipline we reauthorized working with Facebook and Microsoft and other social media platforms to talk about how we can work together to combat child pornography and child exploitation, using the authority of the CyberTipline. We were joined by the new U.S. attorney there, John Bash. I asked him whether his prosecutors who were prosecuting these cases or the FBI agents who would investigate them or his support staff who support the U.S. attorney's office—whether any of them were getting paid, and he said no. But everybody showed up at work, doing their job, fighting the scourge of child exploitation, even though they weren't getting paid.

Ditto in the Northern District of Texas, where I visited with the U.S. attorney, who gave me the same story. We were there talking about the scourge of human trafficking. Erin Nealy Cox, the U.S. attorney in Dallas, pointed out that, yes, the prosecutors were there at work, the investigators were there, and the support staff were there, even though they were the ones probably earning the most modest paychecks of anybody in the office. Everybody was there, doing their job, even though during these 35 days they had missed two different Federal paychecks.

Thinking now about the solution to our standoff on border security, I wanted to mention that a couple of weeks ago the President flew to McAllen, TX. Senator CRUZ and I joined him in the Rio Grande Valley to hear from the experts. By "the experts," I don't mean folks who run for office here in Washington, DC. I mean the Border Patrol, Customs and Border Protection, and Department of Homeland Security experts who actually work on the ground there along the border.

We also met with mayors and county judges and other folks who live in those communities and are most concerned about safety and security but also the economy of the border region. We discussed with them what sensible border security actually looks like.

We know that physical barriers didn't use to be a partisan issue when the Senator from New York—the Democratic leader—Barack Obama, and Hillary Clinton all voted for the Secure Fence Act back in 2006. We called it a fence then and not a wall, but it was a physical barrier, and it was a nonpartisan issue.

That was then and this is now. When we were talking about physical barriers along the border, my friend Cameron County Judge Eddie Trevino said something that stuck with me, and I have repeated it a number of times, and I think it could be a lesson to all of us about how to approach this entire debate. He said that if law enforcement officials say where barriers are needed, he is all in, but if politicians say where they are needed and they are trying to micromanage border security, consider him a skeptic.

I think what people want—and my sense is what my constituents along the border region and across the State of Texas want and, I dare say, across the country—is to come up with effective solutions that will make our border more secure. Since Texas has 1,200 miles of common border with Mexico, of course, I have thought about this a lot, and I have listened and learned a lot about this. What I have been told and I believe is that at any given place along the border, you are going to have some combination of three elements: physical barriers, technology, and personnel. We need a complement of each of those things in this border security bill that hopefully we will be voting on in the coming weeks.

Many areas along the border are subject to high pedestrian traffic. They need physical barriers. That is why they make sense in El Paso and San Diego and Tucson, for examples. All of these saw a massive drop in apprehensions after fencing or physical barriers were put in place, along with a complement of technology and border agents when they were deployed in the 1990s and 2000s. We know that barriers can work. We have seen it proven time and again.

We all agree that we don't need barriers across the entire 2,000-mile southwestern border. We don't need a great wall from sea to shining sea across the border. One example comes readily to mind. Big Bend National Park, for example, is home to massive canyons, and some of the cliffs reach more than 3,000 feet high along the Rio Grande River. It is a spectacular and beautiful place. It would not only be impractical but completely wasteful to build a physical barrier on top of a towering cliff. That is just one example of where you might want to use some other parts of that triad of technology and personnel because a physical barrier wouldn't make much sense.

There are others who have suggested that we use the natural barrier of the Rio Grande River. Right now, much of that river is filled with something called *carrizo* cane, which makes it harder for the Border Patrol to actually locate people trying to enter the United States illegally. It reduces the effectiveness of that natural physical barrier of the Rio Grande River. We need to find a way to eradicate that in a way that will not only allow that river to be more of a natural barrier but also provide greater visibility for the Border Patrol.

In some areas, as I said, physical barriers, either new, repaired, or replaced are desperately needed. In others, surveillance technology, such as sensors or drones, will do the trick. Many additional personnel are needed to improve efficiency or alleviate staffing shortages. It doesn't make sense to have a physical barrier if there is no Border Patrol agent to detain somebody entering the country illegally or to interdict the drugs that come across the border.

As my friend Judge Trevino said, politicians shouldn't be the ones decid-

ing exactly where along the border each of these three elements is applied. That is why we have asked and will continue to ask Customs and Border Protection—the experts—what we need and provide funding to implement the changes they have asked for.

I think it is a statement of the obvious to say that, in addition to improving the physical security across our border, we need to make changes in our border security approach and immigration system as a whole. Unfortunately, we are not even dealing with the larger problem of our broken immigration system.

Several years ago, I introduced legislation to the so-called Gang of 8 immigration bill that we were debating at the time. The legislation I introduced was called the RESULTS amendment. I believe the foundation of that legislation should be incorporated in any future legislation we come up with here in the next few weeks. One of the main requirements was for the Department of Homeland Security to come up with a plan to achieve operational control of every single border sector, meaning a 90-percent border apprehension rate. Requiring this sort of metric or apprehension rate will provide a clear, objective way to measure border security. Ironically, the way we measure border security now is that we know how many people are detained, but we don't know how many get away. It is a strange way to count effectiveness by counting the ones we detain but not the ones who get away—which obviously we can't do. If we come up with a better way to measure border security with a clear-cut metric like a 90-percent operational control requirement, I think it would provide a better way for us to determine how to efficiently spend the tax dollars we are talking about, which we are stewards of here in the Congress, and ensure that we are focusing our resources on the highest priority areas. This requirement would allow us to do that.

That particular legislation, the RESULTS amendment, would also require increased surveillance and provide solutions to commonsense problems. For example, it would have prevented violent criminals from acquiring legal status, provided law enforcement with critical national security and public safety information, and mitigated the problem of visa overstays. This RESULTS amendment would have strengthened biometric requirements.

It is ironic, as we talk about border security and immigration, that we turn a blind eye to the 40 percent of illegal immigration that occurs when people enter the country legally and overstay their visas. Unless they commit some other crime in the course of their time here, they are largely not located. So we need to find a better way to enforce all of our immigration laws, including visa overstays.

We can't ignore the fact that our border is not only a place that needs security but that is important to the economic vitality of not only my State

but of our country. The financial impact of legitimate trade and travel is enormous. As a matter of fact, \$300 billion worth of goods flow back and forth through Texas's ports of entry alone in a given year. That is why this type of legislation is so important—because it provides resources to significantly reduce wait times at border crossings, which makes the movement of people and goods faster but no less secure.

Finally, this legislation took a stand against the brutal human rights violations we see along the southern border by stiffening penalties on abusive human smugglers and transnational criminal organizations. There may have been a time when the so-called coyotes were a mom-and-pop operation. "Coyotes" is just the name for human smugglers. Now it is big business, and the same criminal organizations that move drugs and economic migrants also traffic in human beings for sex and other involuntary servitude. It is no longer a mom-and-pop operation, to be sure, and we need to make sure the penalties for this illegal activity are increased and stiffened to meet the challenge of transnational criminal organizations.

I believe that all of these points still deserve a place in our debate today. I look forward to working with our colleagues in the coming weeks to create meaningful and lasting change to strengthen our border security as well as to fix longstanding problems with our immigration system. I believe we can find common ground, and I hope our Democratic colleagues will follow through in their commitment to negotiating in good faith so that we do.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, after the longest shutdown in government history, Federal employees across the country are finally returning to work. National parks are reopening, grant programs are up and running again, and those who depend on essential government services are now being helped by our Nation's public servants.

One of the things that impressed me the most during the shutdown was, as I met with our Federal employees who were affected, their dedication to their jobs and to the services they were providing to the American people. Like the rest of the Members of Congress and people in this country, I was thrilled when we were able to end that shutdown last week, and I was especially pleased to work with my colleagues to make sure government operations would return to normal. This shutdown should never have happened.

For 35 days, partisan gamesmanship forced government Agencies to close their doors, and more than 380,000 Fed-

eral workers were furloughed and another 450,000 employees worked without pay.

These Federal workers, some of whom live paycheck to paycheck, were forced to have very difficult conversations with their families on what bills will not be paid this month and how to make ends meet. I remember I was at the Coast Guard station in New Hampshire last week meeting with members of our Coast Guard who were talking about the Coast Guard cutter that is stationed there—the *Reliance*—heading out that morning and the families of those Coast Guard members who were on the *Reliance* not having any idea when they would again be paid.

Thankfully, these 800,000 employees and thousands more Federal contractors are returning to work. Unfortunately, the prolonged economic effect of the shutdown and the morale of the Federal workforce is going to last much longer.

A report released today by the Congressional Budget Office found that during the shutdown, the economy took an \$11 billion hit, including \$3 billion that is gone forever, which we are never going to be able to recover. When people aren't paid, they don't shop. They don't travel. They miss payments. They default on loans. They can't participate in our economy if they have nothing in the bank.

Although the shutdown has ended, some Federal employees who have gone without a paycheck for over a month still may not get paid until the end of this week. I know everybody is trying to make sure those paychecks go out as soon as possible. They can't go out soon enough for those workers who have missed their paychecks.

As the President continues to threaten another shutdown in the coming weeks, Congress needs to take additional action to protect Federal workers. I am cosponsoring three bills that would provide some financial security to those employees. These bills would eliminate penalties for Federal workers who make early withdrawals from their savings plans, require the government to pay back all Federal employees with interest, just as the private sector does, and they would ensure that excepted Federal employees are eligible for unemployment insurance compensation.

What we know happened during the shutdown is that those people who were working couldn't collect unemployment because they were working, even though they weren't getting paid. That is something we would never allow the private sector to do.

I was very disappointed to hear the President and White House officials say over the weekend that if the President doesn't get what he wants, he is going to shut down the government again. The American people, our economy, can't afford another partisan shutdown that jeopardizes our Federal workforce and does nothing to increase border security. Our focus now needs to be on

working together to pass bipartisan legislation that secures our borders and funds our government.

Protecting our borders shouldn't be an exercise in partisanship. In the past, in the Senate, we have been able to garner support from across the ideological spectrum to fund commonsense proposals that provide effective security.

If we look at this chart that traces appropriations for Customs and Border Protection from 2014 to 2018, we can see that Congress has consistently increased funding for Customs and Border Protection each of the past 5 fiscal years, providing nearly \$60 billion for the Agency. In 2014, we provided \$10.6 billion; 2015, \$10.7 billion; 2016, \$11.2 billion; 2017, \$12.1 billion; and 2018, \$14 billion. It is consistently increasing the dollars that are available.

Just last year, Congress provided \$1.3 billion for border fencing on our southern border—\$1.3 billion last year. I am not sure everyone in the administration knows that is how much money we have provided. The money has yet to be spent on the actual construction of proposed fencing projects.

As we are thinking about how we spend our money on border security, we need to be spending it in a way that is smart. We should not be putting aside money we can't spend yet when there are other needs we have for those dollars.

We need to build on these proposals moving forward. We need to focus on technology, on infrastructure, and we need to focus on the personnel who are needed at the southern and northern borders to provide actual security that works. We need to make targeted investments and innovative technologies that provide comprehensive surveillance at our borders and ports of entry, along with increasing personnel and physical infrastructure where necessary.

As a member of the Appropriations subcommittee that funds Homeland Security, I have supported these investments in the past and so has the majority of the members of the committee. We have worked in a bipartisan manner to secure our borders.

I have supported funding for targeted fencing in vulnerable areas, funding for more Border Patrol agents, for better surveillance, for screening technologies, and for increased security at ports of entry. I intend to continue to support commonsense efforts such as these.

Unfortunately, providing billions of dollars to fulfill a campaign promise to build a wall that has no plan that has been presented for how to do that is really not a serious proposal. It is unlikely to solve the problems it seeks to address.

Our efforts to secure the border should focus on solutions that will stem the flow of opioids, fentanyl, and other drugs that have decimated our communities. Last year, New Hampshire had the second highest rate of

overdose deaths due to opioids, primarily fentanyl.

Physical infrastructure and some fencing in high-risk areas can help to disrupt drug trafficking across our borders, but it should be done in conjunction with and not at the expense of other technologies that allow law enforcement to identify and disrupt criminal activity.

Several years ago, Senator HOEVEN and I—when he was chair and I was ranking member of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee—visited the southern border. We had a chance to talk to Customs and Border Protection officials, to immigration officials at the border. They talked about the drugs that come across at the ports of entry. In Laredo, we saw dogs and CBP agents looking in a pickup truck for an area in front of the gas tank where they thought drugs were being secreted.

We are not going to intercept those drugs that are affecting our States and communities by building a wall. We have to have new screening technologies at our ports of entry, new technologies that utilize artificial intelligence and advanced imaging so they can assist in identifying contraband and weapons that are hidden in commercial cargo.

Sensor technologies and other surveillance techniques, such as unmanned aerial systems, or drones, allow our border agents to expand their region and respond immediately to illegal activity at our borders. When resourced and deployed appropriately, these types of smart investments are far more likely to interrupt the flow of narcotics than a costly and ineffective border wall.

It is also important to remember that the United States and Canada share the longest international border in the world, and the northern border may not face the same threats as those posed at the southern border, but transnational criminal organizations and other bad actors still attempt to exploit vulnerabilities and enter the country illegally through our northern border.

Coming from a State that shares a small portion of our border with Canada, I have heard from law enforcement authorities in New Hampshire. Our law enforcement officials face unique challenges with enforcement and security. These challenges include a lack of broadband in highly rural areas that impedes law enforcement activities. If we see somebody coming across the border in northern New Hampshire from Canada, we can't pick up a cellphone and call law enforcement because we don't have cell service in northern New Hampshire along our border.

Truly comprehensive border security must recognize the threat at our northern border and invest in technologies to address the unique challenges that law enforcement faces there. We need broadband access in northern New

Hampshire and all along our northern border.

We also need to improve the functioning of our immigration port system. We really need comprehensive immigration reform, but we are not going to get there, I don't think, by the February 15 deadline. We can look at what is slowing down our immigration court system and help support those efforts to adjudicate immigration cases fairly and expeditiously and reduce the enormous immigration court case backlog.

Again, as a ranking member of the Appropriations subcommittee that funds the Department of Justice, I have supported strong funding to increase the number of immigration judges, including an increase of \$59 million for fiscal year 2019. This increased amount is, in fact, the President's request that would support new immigration judge teams. We already put that money into the 2019 budget, if we are allowed to go forward with what the Appropriations Committee in the Senate agreed to.

Our immigration courts currently have a backlog of more than 800,000 cases waiting to be heard, and the shutdown exacerbated this problem by forcing more than 80,000—80,000—court hearings to be canceled. The average wait time to hear an immigration case is already longer than 2 years, and these unnecessarily canceled hearings will be rescheduled into 2020 and beyond.

This shutdown-caused delay means years longer that people who should be deported, who may pose a threat in this country, will be able to stay here and years longer that the people who may deserve relief, who should be allowed to stay in the United States, will have to wait in limbo.

Now that the shutdown has ended, now that cooler heads can prevail, and we can look at what makes sense to secure our borders, look at what we have already done, how we can build on that and how we can address legitimate concerns about what is going on at our borders, it is time for all of us—Republicans and Democrats—to put aside gamesmanship and to support common-sense proposals.

It is my hope that the conference committee that has already been appointed to negotiate funding for the Department of Homeland Security will focus on the solutions that work rather than proposals that score political points. This shutdown took an enormous economic and emotional toll not only on our Federal workforce but on everyone who accesses government services.

As we craft a bipartisan proposal to fund the government and secure our borders, let's not forget the impact that has had on the people we serve and on the potential impact if we don't get this resolved by February 15.

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.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 240 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. RUBIO. 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. RUBIO. Mr. President, I come to talk about the bill before us, S. 1. We have had multiple attempts to get onto this bill. I am hopeful that today will be that day.

VENEZUELA

Mr. President, I wanted to briefly, for just a moment, divert to a different topic on Venezuela that was in the news about an hour and a half ago. The administration announced additional measures. It has been covered in the press, largely as sanctions on the regime of Nicolas Maduro, the illegitimate usurper and head of the criminal syndicate that controls the security agencies in that country.

While it most certainly is going to hurt him, I think it is important to point out that the more accurate way to describe it is that Venezuela sends about 500 billion barrels of crude oil a day to the United States to be refined. That belongs to the Venezuelan people. What has been happening is that U.S. refineries pay for it. It is about three-quarters of the cash generated by the state-run oil company.

Then, Maduro and his cronies steal that money—not to build roads or feed people. They steal it to bribe and keep people loyal to him. If you are a high-ranking general in Venezuela, with the fancy uniforms and the stars and bars, in those pictures that you see—why are they loyal to Maduro? They are "loyal" to him because he keeps providing them access to corruption. One way is by pilfering and completely taking all that cash out of the state-run oil company. That ends today.

What is going to be done now is that U.S. refineries are still allowed to buy crude, but the payments, instead of being made to Maduro so he can steal it, will be set aside in an account to be used by the legitimate government of that country. If you are one of these corrupt officials who has been "loyal" to Maduro up until today because of the money, that is about to end, as well, and perhaps you should reevaluate your loyalty, for lack of a better term.

S. 1

Mr. President, the topic before us today is S. 1. This bill, among other things, is a response to decisions that were made recently on the U.S. presence in Syria. I believe that the decision to draw down is a mistake. I have communicated that to the President, and he invited us to the White House a couple of weeks ago to have a conversation with a group of us. Irrespective of what ends up happening, there are going to be byproducts of that decision. There will be consequences of it. Several of those consequences are going to directly impact our allies in the region.

Let me begin by saying that it will directly impact the United States. We already see that ISIS in Syria was on the path to morphing into an insurgency. An insurgency is different than what they used to be. ISIS used to take over big pieces of land and fly their black flag, and they had buildings. In some ways, that is terrifying because they control land and they have people under their command. In some ways, it is easier to target them. They are telling you where they are, and you can see it, and it is out in the open.

Insurgency is different. It is when you blend into the population. By day, you might be a baker or guy who runs a cafe. By night, you are an ISIS killer. They sort of come in and out of the population. They don't control large swaths of territory. They sort of embed themselves. This insurgency is the threat we face and the challenge we had in Iraq that led to the surge to have to come back in and rectify it. ISIS was already on the path to doing that. This will make it easier for them. It is harder to target an insurgency than it is to target the caliphate.

I am deeply concerned that the U.S. withdrawal will make it easier for them not to just establish an insurgency but, worst of all, it will provide greater operational safety. That means more space in which they can plot to attack the United States and our interests around the world, and even here in the Homeland. There is real reason to be concerned about that. You know, 9/11 doesn't happen if al-Qaida doesn't have a safe haven in Afghanistan. I fear what ISIS might be able to do if, in portions of Syria, they are able to establish a safe haven from which they can raise money, produce videos, recruit, try to inspire terrorist attacks abroad, and even direct them.

But one of the other byproducts is the impact it has with regard to Israel. Envision for a moment a small country whose narrowest point is only 9 or 10 miles wide, and it faces a threat to its north in Syria. In Syria already, in addition to ISIS and all of these other criminal and terrorist elements that are there, you have a growing Iranian presence. That growing Iranian presence begins with Iran itself. If current trends continue, Iran is going to base within Syria surface-to-air missiles designed to shoot down airplanes. They

are going to base ballistic missiles even closer now to Syria. They don't have to launch them up to Israel. They don't have to launch them from Iran. They can now launch them from Syrian territory, just off the Israeli border. They have UAVs. We have seen how the Houthis have helped to operationalize those. All of that is sponsored by Iran operating out of Yemen.

One of the mortal enemies that Israel faces is Hezbollah. They are headquartered primarily in Lebanon, but there are Hezbollah elements all over Syria. For a long time now, they have been getting their armaments and weaponry from Iran, but it had to be flown, especially in the middle of this conflict.

Imagine that now Iran has the ability to arm and equip Hezbollah with all of these things, not just from the air but through a ground route where they can actually ship things to them from the ground. That is why they so desperately care about what is happening in Syria. It gains them operational space—not to mention that Hezbollah is in Syria.

There is a wing of Hezbollah that is inside of Syria. Imagine that now, if you are Israel, you already face the threat of Hezbollah. Hezbollah has already developed rockets that they are now making. They are not shipping them anymore. They are now building these rockets. They are developing these rockets in Lebanese territory. They are not the rockets from the last time they had a war with Israel. These new rockets are precision guided, meaning they can actually aim them to hit certain areas and avoid hitting others.

They have a lot more than they used to have. Just by volume, they can overwhelm Israeli defenses very quickly or potentially. You already have that problem in Lebanon. Imagine that exact same problem, not just from Lebanon but to the north of you, coming from Syria, just across the Golan Heights.

Imagine you are Israel and you have your mortal enemy Iran, your mortal enemy Assad, your mortal enemy Hezbollah, and these other radical Shia groups all to the north of you in that country. Israel is taking action. They are increasingly and openly acknowledging this as they launch these attacks into Syria to try to degrade their capabilities and put themselves in that position. They cannot allow people and they cannot allow organizations whose very existence is justified by the destruction of the Jewish State to openly operate and increase their capacity just north of their borders. That is what is happening, and that is why Israel is increasingly striking.

Listen to the words in a broadcast that I believe was yesterday or the day before. The head of Hezbollah was on television in an open television interview, and he basically warned Israel. He said: If Israel continues to strike

within Syria in this way, it is going to lead to a war. It is going to lead to a war because Syria and its allies, including them, but also Iran, are going to have to retaliate for these attacks.

Walk through this with me. Israel attacks out of self-defense because they have to. Syria, Hezbollah, and Iran, and a gang of others respond against Israel. Then, Israel has to respond in kind, potentially, even hitting Hezbollah inside of Lebanon, and suddenly we have another Israel-Hezbollah war, but much broader than the last one because it will involve Syria and it will involve Iran, and it will be far deadlier because, unlike the last time, they now have a lot more of these missiles and these missiles are precision-guided.

This is the threat that Israel faces. It is very real. Events there can quickly spiral into that. One of the things our bill does is it puts in law the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Israel that says that, in the case of conflict, the United States will be there to help Israel rearm and reequip itself, and we will work hand-in-hand with them on things like missile defense, which are mutually beneficial, by the way, because all these innovations happening there can also benefit us here or by protecting our presence around the world.

Why is this bill important? First, because of the practical implications of it. We want Israelis to be able to defend and protect themselves. It sets aside, in our arsenal, weapons that are held there for purposes of if Israel ever needs them. For those who are worried about whether that would degrade our own capability, the law says it has to be done in a way that doesn't degrade our own capabilities to defend ourselves. It sets in place the assurance that if Israel gets into one of these wars that quickly escalates against multiple parties—Hezbollah, Iran, potentially Syria, themselves—and they start running out of weaponry—rockets to defend themselves, munitions and the like—we will be there to quickly rearm them. That is just the practical implication of it.

Here is the other: Israel's adversaries will know this too. They would know that if their goal is to overwhelm Israel and deplete Israel, it will not work because the United States is committed to them.

Our hope here is two-fold. One is to strengthen Israel so they would be able to withstand such an assault, but the other is to hopefully deter a war by making it very clear that Israel will never run out of missiles. They will never run out of munitions to defend themselves because the United States will be there to support them every step of the way.

One of the first things this bill does is it establishes that into our law because this is not a threat that is going to go away in 2 years or even 5 years. This threat is an ancient one. It has grown more dangerous.

This bill was held up because my colleagues on the other side of the aisle said they didn't want to hear any bills until the shutdown was over if the bill didn't have to do with the shutdown. The shutdown is over. I am hopeful today that this bill, which I believe enjoys wide bipartisan support, when we finally get the vote on it and passage, that we will have an extraordinary number of votes across the aisle and across this Chamber and that we will finally begin debate on this important topic.

There are other elements in this bill involving human rights violations that occurred in Syria, supporting Jordan, and the BDS movement, which we will talk more about tomorrow. At its core, the linchpin is helping Israel defend itself.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, let me associate myself with the remarks made by my friend and distinguished colleague from Florida.

The importance of this bill cannot be overstated. It is an incredibly important bill. I rise today, once again, to bring it to my colleagues here in the Senate. This time, hopefully, we can get enough votes to move it forward. It is the Strengthening America's Security in the Middle East Act of 2019. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support moving ahead on this commonsense bipartisan legislation.

This package of bills is important and time sensitive. Israel and Jordan are our steadfast allies and friends in the Middle East, and they need support and the critical aid that this legislation would deliver. Our nations depend on one another, and we should not let them down.

Included in this legislation also is a very important bill, the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, which, as I have noted numerous times before, very nearly passed the full Senate by unanimous consent last year. We were within one vote of getting unanimous consent on it.

This legislation is long overdue. Half a million Syrians have died at the hands of the Syrian dictator, Assad, his friends, and their allies, and it is past time that we put an end to it.

This bill includes strong financial sanctions to target those responsible in the Assad regime for the terrible loss of life and destruction in Syria. Further, it extends sanctions to those who would support the Syrian regime's actions in the war in Syria, such as Iran and Russia. The tragic loss of life in Syria has gone on far too long. We need to take action now to pressure those who have the ability to bring this war to an end—and they do have the ability to bring this war to an end.

The State of Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. It is surrounded by oppressive nations, many of which, like Iran, wish to do Israel harm. Their security and stability in

the region is of extreme importance to all Americans. This legislation would protect Israel where we can here in the United States by rejecting anti-Israel boycotts.

I hope that today you will all join me in a bipartisan way in moving forward on this important legislation.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to proceed to the motion to reconsider the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 1 is agreed to, and the motion to reconsider the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 1 is agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill 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 proceed to Calendar No. 1, 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.

Todd Young, Mike Rounds, Richard C. Shelby, James E. Risch, Mike Lee, Josh Hawley, John Boozman, Shelley Moore Capito, Mike Crapo, Tim Scott, Cory Gardner, Roy Blunt, Steve Daines, Marco Rubio, Rob Portman, John Barrasso, Mitch McConnell.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to 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, shall be brought to a close upon reconsideration?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) would have voted "yea" and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), and the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 74, nays 19, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 11 Leg.]

YEAS—74

Alexander	Fischer	Portman
Barrasso	Gardner	Risch
Bennet	Graham	Roberts
Blackburn	Grassley	Romney
Blumenthal	Hassan	Rosen
Blunt	Hawley	Rounds
Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Braun	Inhofe	Sasse
Burr	Isakson	Schumer
Cantwell	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Capito	Jones	Scott (SC)
Cardin	Kennedy	Shelby
Casey	King	Sinema
Cassidy	Klobuchar	Smith
Collins	Lankford	Stabenow
Coons	Lee	Sullivan
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Cortez Masto	Markey	Thune
Cotton	McConnell	Toomey
Crapo	McSally	Warner
Cruz	Menendez	Whitehouse
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Duckworth	Murkowski	Wyden
Enzi	Murray	Young
Ernst	Perdue	

NAYS—19

Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Brown	Kaine	Shaheen
Carper	Leahy	Udall
Durbin	Merkley	Van Hollen
Feinstein	Murphy	Warren
Gillibrand	Peters	
Heinrich	Reed	

NOT VOTING—7

Booker	Hoeben	Tillis
Cramer	Paul	
Harris	Schatz	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 74, the nays are 19.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion was agreed to, upon reconsideration.

The senior Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. What is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion to proceed to S. 1.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 5 minutes.

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

DATA PRIVACY DAY

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, today is Data Privacy Day, a day set aside to raise awareness about how personal information is being used, collected, and shared in today's digital society. It is also an opportunity to educate the public about how to safeguard individual data and also an opportunity to encourage businesses to respect consumer privacy when correcting and dealing with data.

As we all know, data-driven innovation is exploding today, and that is a good thing. It allows developers, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and large companies to create applications, products, and services that are increasingly customized for users. This is great for consumers and great for the economy.

The benefits from this explosion of data come in the form of increased productivity, convenience, and cost savings. The benefits also extend to our

very health and safety. In using data and in using this data economy, we can serve to improve the daily quality of life for every American.

All in all, opportunity in this digital era is potentially limitless. However, to realize our Nation's economic and societal potential in the global digital economy, consumers need to have trust and confidence that their data will be protected and secure in the internet marketplace. That is the reason we are emphasizing data privacy today.

I want to talk briefly about the potential for legislation in this Congress. Over the last decade, there have been numerous calls at all levels of government in the United States and elsewhere for baseline privacy legislation to protect consumers in a world of Big Data. Some jurisdictions have already acted. For example, the European Union recently enacted the General Data Protection Regulation—commonly known as GDPR. California has enacted and signed into law the California Consumer Privacy Act, CCPA. We see some American companies, not based in California, certainly not based in Europe but who are dealing with data across the board, calling on Congress to act and enact baseline privacy protections across the board in the United States of America.

I say that we have reached a point where Congress needs to act to develop Federal privacy legislation, and this is a viewpoint that is accepted and supported across the aisle by Democrats and Republicans in both Houses of the Congress. Strengthening consumer data protections will be a top legislative priority for the Commerce Committee during this Congress. We will continue to build on the current momentum in the Senate as we discuss how to approach the development of bipartisan privacy legislation in this Congress.

This is one of the best opportunities in this Congress, will be one of the best opportunities for Democrats and Republicans to work together and put something on the President's desk for his signature. I know that through collaboration, we can develop a legislative proposal that provides consumers with meaningful choices and strong protections of their data, both online and offline. We need a legislative proposal that will be balanced, balancing the need for flexibility, for businesses to innovate, invest, and compete. This issue is critical to maintaining U.S. leadership in the global digital economy.

I hope next year, at this point in time, we will be discussing and celebrating the enactment of bipartisan legislation to ensure both consumer protection and continued innovation in the United States. Happy Data Privacy Day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, there has been a lot of conversation

about the damage to our economy and to the basic operations of government from the shutdown. Rightfully so, it is something we should talk about and spend some time trying to figure out how to manage this for the future, what shutdowns do to our future.

What has been interesting is how absent that same conversation has been over the last 2 years as my colleagues on the other side of the aisle actively worked to shut down the basic operations of government by not allowing nominations to proceed in the normal process.

In December, with little fanfare and into early January, 386 nominations from the Trump administration were returned back to the Trump administration with a "no action"—386 people. Those were judges, those were potential board members, those were individuals, many of them Deputy Assistant Secretaries of different Agencies, individuals who keep the basic functioning of government open and working. Three hundred and eighty-six of those nominations had no action on this floor because something very different was happening during the last 2 years. It had not happened like this before in the beginning of any Presidency—in the first 2 years—that his nominations were blocked on the floor not with a vote, with time.

In the past, with nominations, a person would be nominated by the President. They would go to the committees. They would get a full background check investigation. There would be questions for the record. The committees would then have an open debate in the committee. They would vote as a committee. If they were voted out of committee, there would be additional questions for the record. Then, once those were done, they would get an up-or-down vote. Often those were voice votes, even here. It was something that was assumed because they had been approved by committees, and the background checks had been done.

In the last 2 years, 128 times, Members of the Senate required what is called a cloture vote—one more hurdle to go through—so that literally they would have to file cloture on those, allow for an intervening day for them to sit out there, and then 30 hours of debate on that person—30 hours of additional debate. That is after the intervening day. You have 24 hours, plus another 30 that is all set out there, to add a little additional time.

With over 1,000 nominees whom the executive branch would do, it is not possible to get through all of those if you continue to request an additional 2 days in the process to work on each of them.

For individuals to prevent these different Agencies from working and functioning, to prevent the activities of government, you can just request cloture votes over and over again—128 times to basically slow down the Senate so much and to slow down the workings of government all over DC so

much that it can't operate at its capacity.

This has to be resolved.

Two years ago, I saw this trend that was moving in the Senate, and I said that long-term for the Senate, this will damage the functioning of government and of the Senate. We have to address it.

So 2 years ago I asked for a reach-out to say: How do we actually resolve this? We had some ongoing meetings. We had a full committee hearing dealing with the issue of the nominations process and how to resolve this in December of 2017. That was after months and months and months of meetings in preparation for that.

We had a markup in April of 2018 to talk about how we could resolve this and what proposals are out there.

I had numerous conversations with Republican and Democratic Members of the Senate to be able to resolve the issue in the Senate because, although in the past you could always request a cloture vote on someone if there was someone truly controversial, this was being used differently. This was not being used to address someone truly controversial; this was being used to shut down the functioning of government.

Many of those individuals—once they did get their cloture vote and that obligatory time—passed with 80 and 90 votes. They weren't people—I have heard people say that if Trump would put up better nominees, then this would be easier. It wasn't that. It was purely dilatory, to slow down or shut down Agencies' operations based on not allowing them to hire staff to actually do the job. That government shutdown, which has been ongoing for 2 years' time, will continue to go until this Senate resolves it.

So after 2 years of meetings, I am making a proposal to this body: We need to fix this. We need to fix the nomination process to have an orderly process so that when there is a controversial nominee, they can be addressed with additional time on the floor, even past the committee time, even past the background checks, even past the additional questions they are asked—to give additional time but in a reasonable way so we can continue to operate as the Senate.

My simple proposal is that we have 2 hours of additional debate, if additional time is allotted, and, quite frankly, that is after the intervening day, so there would be a full day of debate and then an additional 2 hours on the next day that would be allotted to give full time to anyone who may be a problem. That is 2 hours of additional blocked-off time in addition to the additional day that is put in place. I think that is plenty of time.

If it is a Supreme Court Justice we are talking about, if it is a Cabinet official, maybe 30 hours would be the best option for that, as well. So we would do 2 hours for most nominees, 30 hours for Cabinet level and for the Supreme Court or circuit courts. That

would give plenty of time to do additional debate, and it would simplify the process.

This proposal is not really all that controversial. I have talked to many of my Democratic colleagues, and they seem to nod their heads and say: Yes, this is a better way to resolve it. The answer I am getting back is: Let's vote for that now but let it not start until January of 2021.

Their assumption is that they are going to beat President Trump in an election, and they will take over, and they certainly don't want the Senate to function when there is a Democratic President the same way it is functioning when there is a Republican President.

My gentle nod back to them is that there is absolutely no way we should ever agree to that. Why would we ever do that? What is happening is, the last 2 years of this shutdown—the slowdown of all of these Agencies, which has happened by blocking all of these nominees—have created this muscle memory in the Senate, and if we don't fix it now, it is going to keep going.

My Democratic colleagues who say "We are going to continue to block you for the next 2 years the same way to shut down the functioning of Agencies" with some delusional belief that 2 years from now this will not happen to them if they happen to win the Presidency—that is false, and they know it. If we don't resolve this now and allow this President to be able to function with his nominees, as any President in the past has, then this is going to just keep going, and it will hurt the long-term functioning of our government. So it is an absurd thought to say: We will vote on it now, but it will not actually take effect until 2021. The reasonable thing is, let's resolve it now.

This simple proposal I am putting out in the next few days will make it public, and in February I hope there will be a meeting with the Rules Committee to allow open debate in the Rules Committee, for Republicans and Democrats alike to look at this issue and resolve it, to make any edits or changes. If there is a different way to resolve this, I am open to any other resolution. But for the long-term health of our government and of the Senate and how it operates, we have to resolve this because we can't have individuals hanging out there for over a year and expect that this is going to get better.

Let me give you some examples. For over a year, the Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services sat out there and then was returned back to the President at the end of the session and will have to start all over again. It is the same with the Chief Counsel for Advocacy in the Small Business Administration, the inspector general in the Office of Personnel Management, Governors for the U.S. Postal Service, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce, the Ambassador to Colombia, the Ambassador to Morocco, and the General

Counsel for the Department of Navy. These were all individuals who were out there for over a year with no action, waiting.

We will not get the best and brightest in our country to set aside their life for a nomination process that is over 1 year and then goes back to the White House, and then they have to start all over again the next year, and maybe it goes another year. Who in America can put their life on hold for all of that time? We want the best and brightest to be able to serve. Blocking them with slowdown tactics will prevent that from happening in the future.

I am trying to be fair in this process. Let's do this the right way, the way we all know it should be done. Let's take it to the Rules Committee. Let's put a proposal out there to fix the nomination process. Let's get the 60 votes that are required to resolve the nomination process through the Rules Committee to the floor of the Senate and actually fix that as a standing order. Let's resolve it now, lest this drags on for another 2 years and it never gets better.

This has been a 2-year process to get to this point, and in the days ahead, when we release this text, I hope my colleagues will engage in reasonable conversation to resolve that. I am open to that, but I want us to fix the problem and admit that a problem needs to be fixed and solved.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas (Mr. SULLIVAN).

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ACT

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss legislation that Senator CARDIN and I introduced last year and successfully worked to move through the legislative process, with lots of help from many others.

The Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act was passed by the House and Senate near the end of the 115th Congress and was signed into law in January of this year. We are thankful that our colleagues in both Chambers joined us in supporting this meaningful legislation focused on improving the lives of women and families around the world.

Because women make up the majority of the world's poor and are often held back by gender-specific constraints to economic empowerment, such as lack of access to financial services and credit, it was important to recognize that it is within our power to help elevate and enable them to achieve their economic dreams and aspirations.

In many corners of the world, cultural and historical barriers that make it difficult for women to start businesses, build savings, and make meaningful economic contributions to their communities are long established and serve to prevent many women from attaining greater stability in their everyday lives—to the detriment of their own societies as well as the global economy.

Building on our own past and experiences in the United States, we can help women in the world overcome obstacles that impede their ability to substantially contribute to economic activity and industry at home and, more broadly, within the world economy.

The Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act provides an avenue to address this inequality by tapping into the proven abilities of existing U.S. Agencies for international development programs.

USAID, which uses strategic investments to promote growth and development while advancing U.S. interests and influence, is perfectly situated to implement this initiative because it understands how to effectively deploy resources to—as its mission states—"lift lives, build communities, and establish self-sufficiency." The WEEE Act will help the more than 1 billion women who are left out of the world's formal financial system by working to close the nearly \$300 billion credit gap that exists for women-owned small and medium-sized businesses.

Expanding USAID's microenterprise development assistance authority to include small and medium-sized enterprises with an emphasis on supporting those owned, managed, and controlled by women is critical because if these promising, industrious entrepreneurs and innovators are given the opportunity to succeed, the benefits will undoubtedly reach far and wide.

The WEEE Act will also modernize USAID's development assistance toolkit to include innovative credit scoring models, financial technology, financial literacy, insurance, and more to improve property and inheritance rights—all of which are vital in helping to overcome deep-rooted cultural and institutional hurdles that preclude women from accessing the resources necessary for economic success.

Finally, the law directs USAID to include efforts that promote equality and female empowerment throughout its programs. This may seem like a small step, but in reality, it can help transform the way international aid is implemented to the benefit of many women across the globe, poised to succeed when provided the same tools and resources as their peers in nations where those hurdles are absent.

USAID, especially under the leadership of Mark Green, the Administrator, does an exceptional job of stretching a finite amount of resources to achieve meaningful results in some of the world's most impoverished nations.

I have complete confidence that Administrator Green and his team will implement the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act in a way that will simultaneously, and even necessarily, work to the benefit of our international aid mission, while also helping to uplift and empower women in countries all over the world to succeed in a way that has been just beyond their reach until now.

Research shows investing in women has a high rate of return, and that is

exactly what the WEEE Act recognizes and seeks to capitalize on.

As Senator CARDIN, senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, noted when we introduced the bill: “Investment in women creates a positive cycle of change that can lift women, families, communities, and entire countries out of poverty, and this legislation will help us make inroads toward that important goal.”

I would like to thank former Chairman Ed Royce and Congresswoman FRANKEL, as well as their staffs, for their leadership on this bill in the House.

I would also like to thank Senator CARDIN for joining me in sponsoring the bill here in the Senate, as well as our former colleague and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker, for his work to move this bill through the committee process.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support and assistance provided by the White House, particularly from Presidential Advisor Ivanka Trump, who worked tirelessly to advocate for this bill, garner support from NGOs, and ultimately helped us see it across the finish line.

All of those who worked on this bill share an understanding that because women in some parts of the world are pushed so far to the margins that they are denied access to even the most basic financial services, much less business loans, leveling the playing field is the right thing to do. If we can achieve this goal, the world economy stands to grow significantly.

Now that the WEEE Act has become law, we have taken one significant step forward to realizing this laudable aim, and women in developing nations stand to benefit from USAID’s upcoming efforts to help them find and secure their place in our global economy.

The Women’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act advances U.S. values and stimulates real, lasting economic opportunities around the globe for women. It will change lives and communities, promote equality, and help entrepreneurs and innovators thrive—all of which will benefit the global economy and the pursuit of prosperity.

Once again, I extend my thanks and gratitude to all who have worked so hard and helped this bill become law, and I look forward to following its implementation and results.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO BOB LEEPER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for more than 30 years, the men and women of Paducah, KY, have prospered with the leadership of my friend, Bob Leeper, in city, State, and finally county government. There are few individuals more appreciated for their public service in western Kentucky. At the end of last year, Bob completed his term as McCracken County judge-executive, and I would like to take a moment to offer my gratitude and reflect on his many years of service.

There is a common expression identifying two types of people who are elected to office: show horses and work horses. The first kind thrives when driving home a point in front of the camera or in making a bold headline. On the other hand, a work horse will forgo acclaim in favor of accomplishment and reject praise for progress. Without a doubt, Bob has spent his career as a work horse. His achievements will leave a lasting impact on the area and our Commonwealth.

To say the least, Bob cared little for party labels. As a matter of fact, during his distinguished career, Bob hit the political “trifecta” of sorts, having been elected by his constituents as a registered Democrat, then a Republican, and lastly as an Independent.

In his first elected office as Paducah city commissioner, Bob also served as mayor pro tem and quickly earned his colleagues’ respect. From there, Bob won a seat in the Kentucky State Senate. In Frankfort, Bob set himself apart as a constructive leader and a problemsolver. His reputation for handling complex issues with fairness garnered the appreciation of his fellow senators on both sides of the aisle.

Reelected five times, Bob served for 24 years in Kentucky’s legislature including as the chair of the senate appropriations and revenue committee. His work from this important post displayed his integrity, skill, and his characteristic nature as a work horse.

Bob chose to leave the Senate in 2014, but that didn’t end his career of public service. The same year, he was elected as the McCracken County judge-executive, the top job in county government. In that role, Bob had the opportunity to continue serving his community and making positive impacts on the lives of his neighbors. Among his proudest accomplishments, he includes a number of infrastructure improvements at the courthouse, jail, road department, and in the local parks. I enjoyed partnering with him on behalf of workers at Paducah’s U.S. Department of Energy site.

For his decades of service in Kentucky, the current members of the Paducah City Commission wanted to express their gratitude to Bob at his retirement with a lasting testament to his work. The commission unanimously voted to name a footbridge in his honor in Paducah. When completed, the Bob Leeper Bridge will connect the city and county’s trail systems, a fit-

ting tribute to a man who spent his career working to benefit his community.

As he enters his retirement from public service, Bob plans to return to his first calling: treating patients at his chiropractic clinic. He also will spend more time volunteering, playing tennis, and relaxing with his beloved wife Gina. It is my privilege to join so many in McCracken County to thank Bob for his three decades of committed vision and leadership. I ask my Senate colleagues to help me congratulate Judge-Executive Bob Leeper on this milestone and to extend best wishes in his retirement.

Mr. President, the Paducah Sun recently published an editorial expressing appreciation to Bob. 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, Jan. 17, 2019]

SINCERE APPRECIATION: WORDS OF THANKS FOR LONGTIME ELECTED LEADER BOB LEEPER

(By the Editorial Board)

The inspirational quote was painted on Bob Leeper’s office wall at the McCracken County Courthouse in 2015, shortly after he took over as county judge-executive.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate,” the quote from author Marianne Williamson reads. “Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.”

The motivational words stayed on that wall all four years, serving as daily affirmation.

“It’s a reminder that we all have purpose and sometimes it’s bigger than we even realized and we kind of have to accept that place that we are in life, and sometimes it’s important you take a stand,” Leeper said.

A case could be made Leeper’s life purpose, or at least one of them, was serving his native Paducah and McCracken County, which he did in his quiet, transparent and dignified way for more than half his life across three offices.

Leeper, 60, served 31 years total—three as a Paducah city commissioner, 24 as a state senator, and a sole four-year term as judge executive.

He did not run for reelection, and turned over the county’s top leadership post to current judge-exec Craig Clymer earlier this month.

Leeper, a chiropractor by trade, is now enjoying his “political retirement,” spending his time treating patients at his clinic, volunteering in the community, and enjoying one of his favorite hobbies—playing tennis.

He doubts very seriously his name will ever appear on another ballot, which is sure to be a healthy change for him but an unfortunate one for the local community.

“Today, I’d say no, I don’t think that’s going to happen,” he said of someday running again for office. “I learned from four years ago that you never say absolutely no, but I don’t have any vision of anything right now.”

Now is the time for us, and we hope area residents, to thank Leeper for all his hard work on the public’s behalf at the local and state levels. He served us honestly and admirably, often eschewing publicity or attention, and with his constituents’ best interests in mind.

Frankly, leaders who put their communities first are rare these days, and Leeper’s presence and influence will be greatly missed.