

again, this mindless obstruction is unacceptable.

So I was encouraged the President took an opportunity last night to highlight for the Nation exactly what we are up against in this regard. We are into the third year of his Presidency—the third year—and the American people deserve a fully functioning and fully staffed Federal Government after 3 years. It is time for their elected representatives to be part of the solution.

I know several of our colleagues are discussing ways to help the Senate better fulfill its duty in this area. I hope there will be cooperation from the other side of the aisle to identify and advance a durable and fair solution.

President Trump offered a clear picture of the ways in which our policies are delivering significant results to families across America and the urgent challenges we still need to confront together. He offered us a powerful reminder that America's strength and goodness are inextricably linked with our commitment to individual liberty and free enterprise and that we can never allow the United States of America to dim our light by sliding into the failures of socialism. Socialism has failed everywhere it has been tried, and we are not going to try it in this country. We need to do right now what we need to in order to move forward together.

The brief Democratic response showed us one potential way forward. Our colleagues across the aisle could simply deny the facts in front of us about the progress that has taken place—progress which middle-class families all across America can tangibly feel—and use the same, tired, forgettable clichés to divide our Nation along political lines, but the President offered a chance to walk together, unified, along a higher road. Both the tone and the substance of his speech would strike any fair observer as reasonable and thoroughly bipartisan.

Once again, the only way this divided Congress will be able to choose greatness and deliver significant legislation to the American people is by focusing on, as President Trump put it, “cooperation, compromise, and the common good.”

That will need to be our motto moving forward. The Nation we love deserves no less. The American people will be watching us.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 47, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. 47, a bill to provide for the management of the natural resources of the United States, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. 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.

STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night President Trump had the opportunity to bring our parties together and offer the Congress and the country a new vision for the next 2 years of divided government. President Trump squandered the opportunity with a forgettable and, oftentimes, incoherent speech. At times, he called for unity without specifics, and at other times he served up divisive campaign rhetoric that he has used so frequently in the past.

The President's speech was like a 90-minute performance of “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” calling for comity but lacking it throughout with invectives. Unfortunately, President Trump seemed more excited and placed more emphasis on the Mr. Hyde parts of the speech than on the Dr. Jekyll parts.

Listen to a few of the contradictions in the speech. There were so many that I can't mention all of them.

President Trump says he believes in legal immigration but not illegal immigration, but every bill he has pushed on immigration has cut legal immigration as well as illegal immigration, including the proposal he has now sent over, in the debates, where he changes the asylum process dramatically.

President Trump said he would only work with us in Congress if we abandoned our oversight duties. He is back to his old tricks—hostage-taking. He said: I am not going to advance the causes of the American people if Congress investigates me.

Congress is supposed to do oversight of the executive branch. It is one of the things the Founding Fathers put in the Constitution. They were weary of overweening Executive power. They wanted Congress to be a check.

What is President Trump afraid of? If he weren't afraid of these investigations and if he weren't afraid of something that might be there that he did that was wrong, he would shrug his shoulders and say: Let them go forward.

But, instead, he threatens. He threatens the American people by saying: Unless these investigations stop, I am not going to move forward on anything.

How about this one? This one made everybody's eyes roll, even on the Re-

publican side. He said if he weren't elected President, we would be in a war with North Korea—what hyperbole. It is not just hyperbole—what untruth, what selective memory. President Trump began his time in office by precipitously ramping up tensions with North Korea. They were much lower under President Obama than they were with President Trump.

Maybe the most blatant contradiction of all, which makes you just lose respect for the integrity and honesty of the President, was when President Trump spoke about the need to defend protections for Americans with preexisting conditions, while at the very same time his administration is waging a lawsuit that would eviscerate protections for preexisting conditions. How can the President have the nerve to get up on the podium last night and say he wants to preserve preexisting conditions and wage a lawsuit, support a lawsuit that tries to undo them? It is shocking hypocrisy—that one maybe most of all for a speech that had many.

Of course, there were a whole lot of omissions in the speech that many Americans felt should have been placed in. Let me give an example. The President did talk about a few potentials for bipartisan compromise. We Democrats would love to compromise with the President and come up with some things that would advance the causes of working families in America.

He mentioned infrastructure and prescription drugs, but instead of offering substantive ideas and spending some time on these issues, he delivered a couple of lines about each and then moved on. It seemed obligatory and perfunctory. There was no new sinew, no real way to figure out if there is a way we can come together and get something done, because he really didn't seem interested.

He talked about the future of America and didn't even mention climate change. How could you do that? Every scientist who has studied it knows that in the next 10, 20, 30, or 40 years, climate change is going to evoke huge changes in our country and in our world. If you believe in the future and you want to have a good future for our children and grandchildren, which we all do, you can't ignore climate change. You may have different views on it, but you can't ignore it.

He also talked a great deal about the safety of the American people, but there was not one mention about gun safety—not one. Again, maybe not to President Trump, maybe not to his hard-core supporters, but to the rest of America, to talk about the need for security and the safety of Americans and not to talk about gun safety misses the mark badly.

Then he rattled off economic statistics—how great everything is—but completely ignored the difficult economic realities of working Americans. Why do so many Americans not have faith in the future? Why do so many Americans worry that their children

will not have as good a life economically as they do? It is because so much of what the President has done economically has benefited the top 10 percent. Those improve the overall statistics, but they don't improve the lives of the average middle-class person.

Let's take the tax cut, a huge tax cut geared to the wealthy and the powerful corporations. The President said each worker will get about a \$4,000 increase. It didn't happen. Wages are going up by a small amount. They are still way behind where they were in the past. What did these companies do with all of this huge tax break? They got \$1 trillion in buybacks—buybacks, which benefit the corporate CEOs, which benefit the shareholders but do nothing for the workers, since so many of them don't own stock.

In fact, the stock market has become more skewed. About 85 percent of the value of the shares is held by the top 10 percent of Americans.

Then, of course, on the wall, he demanded that Congress fund his wall but showed no signs of remorse over the pointless Trump government shutdown that he precipitated. He didn't mention the pain he caused to 800,000 Federal workers, even though many of them were in the Galleries listening.

I brought as a guest a man named Ronan Byrne. He works in the TRACON, our control tower in New York. He just had two twins. He has two other kids. I saw the nice pictures. He came with his wife. She quit her job when the twins came along.

He lost his salary at an intense job like that, where you have to be on all the time. I have been up there in the TRACON. It is dark. You see little dots, and you can't have them get too near each other because that is a safety issue for the people on the planes, and here he was worried about paying the bills and providing for his children.

Well, there was no mention of people like that. No, it was just about his wall.

It didn't work for the President. We know that. Our Republican colleagues and Leader McCONNELL know that. I think even in his situation, where he is often in a bubble that is often only aimed at the narrow band of his supporters, he touched a hot stove, and I don't think he wants to do it again.

But there was no mention of it. He should have used his speech to say: We are not going to have another government shutdown. There was no word.

There was no plan to tackle our opioid problem. There was no plan to increase wages for the middle class. There was no plan to increase manufacturing jobs.

So anyone who hoped that the President would change course and offer some new bipartisan ideas with some meat on the bone where we could discuss it and begin to move forward to help the American people was sorely disappointed. As I said, his real excitement came in the most divisive parts of the speech on immigration and abortion.

So let's contrast his speech with Stacey Abrams'. The contrast between the President's speech and Stacey Abrams' speech was stunning. The President was political, divisive, calculating, and, at times, even nasty. Ms. Abrams was compelling, warm, and uplifting, showing real compassion for the plight of our average families but also filled with hope and inspired by the promise of the American dream. It was an uplifting speech. Ms. Abrams' speech represented the kind of unifying vision—understanding our challenges but also having some confidence in our ability to solve them—that the President failed to deliver. In short, last night, Stacey Abrams gave President Trump a lesson in how to lead.

Xavier Becerra, speaking from the high school he graduated from in Sacramento, McClatchy High School, gave a wonderful response in Spanish.

We all knew the President would say that the state of our Union was strong, but the American people know the unfortunate truth. On the economy, on healthcare, on governance, and on foreign policy, it is abundantly clear that the Trump administration has been getting failing grades from the American people.

The state of the Trump economy? Failing the middle class. Wealthy shareholders and corporate executives cashed in from the Trump tax bill, while American workers have been left behind.

The state of the Trump healthcare system? Failing American families. Coverage is getting more expensive, and the amount of coverage is declining. Due to the sabotage this administration has done to our healthcare system, this is the first year that fewer Americans have healthcare than they did the year before—the first time in a while.

The state of the Trump administration? Chaos. President Trump has had the most Cabinet turnover in more than a century. He has failed to nominate anyone to one-fifth of our government's top positions. This has nothing to do with the Senate; for one-fifth of the positions, there are no nominations. This is 2 years into this Presidency. The Senate had nothing to do with all the Cabinet members who quit or resigned under a cloud—nothing to do with that either. President Trump likes to blame somebody else for the problems he creates; that is one of his MOs.

The state of President Trump's foreign policy? Inside out. Inside out. Our longstanding allies—countries of NATO—have been alienated. Our adversaries—Russia, China, North Korea—have been emboldened because President Trump doesn't stand up to them. During the national security section of the President's speech last night, the first item he mentioned wasn't Russia's malign activities, North Korea's nuclear program, or even the crisis in Venezuela; it was criticism for our NATO allies. That says it all.

The President's State of the Union last night did something rare for a State of the Union Address: It revealed just how much repair the state of our Union requires; just how much work we still have to do to aid working Americans left behind by an economy that only seems to work for the wealthy and well-connected; to provide American families everywhere with affordable healthcare; to bring stability and accountability to a government too short on both—a government that seems to have made the swamp deeper and more odorous and to further isolate our enemies and give comfort to our allies abroad.

Let us hope and pray that the country can heal. President Trump did nothing to move that forward last night.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHINA

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, a number of us have been coming to the floor for quite some time now, talking about challenges posed by China—the big geostrategic challenges for the United States posed by China.

What has happened over the last couple of years—and I think it is very important—is that this issue went from an issue where not many Senators 2, 3, or 4 years ago were talking about it to now, when Democrats, Republicans—all of us—have recognized that literally for the next 50 to 100 years, the biggest challenges we have in terms of national security and economic security for our Nation are the challenges posed by the rise of China. I think that is an important course correction that we have seen in the Congress and, importantly, from the executive branch.

The Trump administration put out a national security strategy, and that national security strategy said: Yes, we still have very significant challenges with regard to violent, extremist organizations like al-Qaida, like ISIS, but long-term we are shifting to a period in which the most significant economic and national security challenge we face as a nation involves the rise of great powers, particularly China as the pacing threat.

I think the administration deserves a lot of credit for this course correction. It is in the national security strategy of the administration. It is in the national defense strategy of the administration. I believe it is strongly supported by Democrats and Republicans in this body.

You may have seen, for example, that Vice President PENCE gave a speech at the Hudson Institute a couple of

months ago. For anyone in America interested in U.S.-China relations, I commend that speech to you. It was an outstanding speech. In my view, it was probably the most important speech on U.S.-China relations since a former Deputy Secretary of State, Bob Zoellick, gave the speech called the Responsible Stakeholder Speech. That was over a decade ago, and Deputy Secretary Zoellick essentially said to China: You have risen in large measure because of the international system that the United States established after World War II, and you benefited from that. What you need to do now is to become a responsible stakeholder in that system. Here is your opportunity. The system that benefited you more than anybody, the system that the United States led—China, you now have the opportunity to become a responsible stakeholder in that system. We are inviting you into it.

Well, I think pretty much everybody—whether Trump administration officials, Obama administration officials, former Bush administration officials—recognizes that China rejected that offer. They are saying: We don't want to be part of the responsible—we do not want to be a member of the system that the United States has led. We are going to do something different.

They rejected it. Again, I think that is not a controversial statement. China experts—Democrats, Republicans, Trump, Obama, Bush—all pretty much agree that is what has happened. So we need a different approach.

Right now, there are very serious negotiations going on between the Trump administration officials and senior Chinese officials, mostly on economic issues. But this relates to broader challenges we have with China, and I have had a number of discussions with Ambassador Lighthizer, Larry Kudlow, who is the NEC chairman at the White House, Secretary Mnuchin, the Vice President, and the President on this topic. I would say again—because it is important not only for the American people but for the Chinese to know—that there is strong bipartisan backing for what is happening right now in terms of our reorientation of the U.S.-China relationship and what we are finally demanding of them.

Not everything is agreed to. There are some people, I think with good reason, who have some concerns about the use of tariffs, but, overall, I think there is broad bipartisan support in this body—having talked frequently with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle—for what the Trump administration is trying to do with regard to China.

As they look to address these issues—and they just had these high-level negotiations just last week—I thought it would be important to lay out a couple of things that I know many Members of the Senate are interested in. Again, this is to show our backing of these negotiations but also to make sure China knows that it isn't

just the Trump administration that is focused on these issues. The Congress and Senate of the United States of America also hold similar goals.

Obviously, the most important goal is to have a relationship in terms of economics and trade and investment that focuses on fairness, reciprocity in terms of open investment and a trading relationship with China. Fairness, reciprocity, open trade, and investment with China—we do not have that right now. That is one of the big challenges.

As they are looking to continue these negotiations and possibly come up with an agreement with China, I thought it would be important for the Chinese to hear what a number of Members of the Senate believe is important in my discussions. Let me review some of these.

First, we need to ensure that China commits to structural changes in their economy, not just pledges to increase purchases of U.S. goods. Increasing purchases of U.S. goods—whether they are Nebraska farm products, which I know the Presiding Officer cares a lot about, or clean burning Alaska natural gas, which I certainly care a lot about—would be positive. But it is certainly not enough. Structural changes to the way in which they run their economy, to the way in which they treat other countries are critical. It was good to see the President last night in the State of the Union say exactly that.

Structural changes—what do we mean by structural changes? First, China, for decades now, has required American companies that invest in China to essentially transfer their technology in exchange for access to their market. No other country in the world does that. China says they don't do it. They do it. They need to stop that. It is against WTO rules.

Secondly, I am going to talk more in detail about how China consistently steals intellectual property from American and other countries' companies around the world.

Third, they heavily subsidize their state-owned enterprises, which gives them an unfair competitive advantage against our companies and impacts negatively our workers and our families.

No. 1, structural changes have to come, and if they don't, we should not accept this kind of deal.

No. 2, China needs to end the "promise fatigue" that we have had with China by enabling us, through some kind of trade agreement, to hold them accountable for the commitments they make. What do I mean by that? We need assurances from the Chinese that will ultimately be fulfilled that an agreement that is reached at the end by this administration can be enforced. Why is that so important? As I mentioned, these kinds of negotiations have been going on for years. The Obama administration, Bush administration, Clinton administration, all in good faith, have tried to get China to commit to the promises and commit-

ments they have already made and hold to them, whether through their WTO commitments or all kinds of other commitments.

Here is the problem. The talk, the agreements, the WTO, the strategic economic dialogues with China—they all sound good, but for the most part, China has not kept its commitments.

In the United States, we are suffering from promise fatigue. We get commitments from China. They make promises, and then they don't keep them. Promise fatigue—the American people, the U.S. Congress, this administration, and I believe other administrations are tired of that. Whatever agreement the Trump administration is working on should address this issue of promise fatigue.

Let me give you a couple of examples of promise fatigue. Many years ago, I had the honor of serving on the National Security Council staff at the White House under Condoleezza Rice. We were at a meeting. I was a staffer for Secretary Condoleezza Rice, who, at the time was National Security Advisor, and President George W. Bush was in the Oval Office with a senior administration official from China, Madame Wu Yi. She was the Vice Premier. She was a very important person from that country. In this meeting, the President—as President Obama has done, as President Trump has done, as President Clinton has done—President Bush really pressed Madame Wu Yi on intellectual property theft. This was in the Oval Office. This was in a meeting in 2003, over 15 years ago. Madame Wu Yi looked the President of the United States in the eye and said: Mr. President, we are going to fix this. Protecting intellectual property is very important to my country. We know it hurts your country when we steal it. We are going to fix this. I am in charge.

That was pretty powerful. She said it directly to the President of the United States in the Oval Office. I witnessed this.

Let's fast forward to 15 years later. Have they fixed it? No. Has it actually gotten worse? Yes. Promise fatigue.

Let me give a couple of other examples of promise fatigue. In 2015, in the Rose Garden, President Xi of China was standing next to President Obama, and he made essentially two commitments: We are going to stop the cyber theft of industrial products in the United States; we are going to not steal, through the internet, your intellectual property and other valuable trade secrets from American companies—whether related to defense, whether related to other issues—and China will not militarize the South China Sea.

This is 2015—less than 4 years ago—standing next to the President of the United States, the President of China made these commitments in the Rose Garden. Has China kept these commitments? No. They have massively militarized the South China Sea, and they continue their industrial-scale cyber

theft. Great countries, particularly in these kind of settings, need to keep their word. China should know this. A key element of any deal that we as a country strike with China needs to take into account this promise fatigue and have real mechanisms to keep their commitments.

Third, we need to make sure China commits to end its global corrupt practices. What do I mean by that? Predatory Chinese infrastructure financing and bribery of foreign officials are trapping countries around the world in debt and marginalizing outside competition by foreign investors.

There was an article recently in the Wall Street Journal that went into very minute detail of how Chinese officials at the highest levels were bribing senior officials from Malaysia to get investment opportunities with regard to infrastructure in that country.

This is essentially official policy in China to bribe and pay off officials in other countries to help their companies, which are often state-owned and compete against other companies. Is this fair? No. Is this good for the international economic system? No. Does China do it on a regular basis? Yes. Do our companies or the U.S. Government engage in this kind of systematic corruption globally? No.

If the U.S. companies do this, their leaders can go to jail for violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. China has no such prohibitions. To the contrary, they do it as part of official state policy.

Whatever agreement we have with regard to the Chinese on this issue also needs to include addressing this challenge globally of foreign corrupt practices. This kind of state-sponsored corruption should not be tolerated or overlooked. Again, in my discussions with the administration's senior officials, I have encouraged them to make sure this is part of the negotiations in the agreement.

Finally, an important element of our strategy with regard to China has to involve our allies. All of the issues I just talked about—promise fatigue, industrial cyber theft, intellectual property theft—aren't just issues the United States is dealing with. They are issues all of our key allies are dealing with—the Germans, the European Union, Japan, Korea, Canada. Everybody is dealing with these same challenges with regard to China. What does that mean?

The good news is, strategically, the United States is an ally-rich nation, and our adversaries and potential adversaries are ally-poor. We have built a system of alliances. Since World War II, that provides strategic advantage to our Nation. As a matter of fact, one of the most strategic, important advantages we have is our system of alliances, which we need to deepen and broaden. There are many countries in Asia—many countries in Asia—that want a closer relationship with the United States because of the rise of

China. This administration needs to seize that because it makes strategic sense for us, but they also need to coordinate with these countries as we are working on these broader global economic issues as it relates to China. Why? Because if we come to the table, not just the United States but with the Europeans, with the Japanese, with the Koreans, with the Canadians, this provides leverage.

The countries I just named, including ours, constitutes well over two-thirds of the global GDP. If we come together with these demands, we will have much more leverage to get a better deal.

The time is right. I have had the opportunity to talk to senior officials from all of these countries. Every single one of them has challenges like we did with regard to China, and every single one of them wants to work with us.

I commend Ambassador Lighthizer for starting an alliance on trade, as it relates to China, on a regular basis with the EU and Japan. The EU, Japan, and the United States are coordinating on these issues. I think it makes sense for the Ambassador to broaden that coalition—the coalition of the willing on these issues. It does bring significant leverage, and countries are ready for the United States to lean on us. As a matter of fact, the number of countries and Ambassadors whom I have heard who have cited Vice President PENCE's speech on how we have to deal with China has been remarkable. They are looking for U.S. leadership. The administration needs to provide it. Using and making sure we are coordinating with our traditional allies on this issue is vital, and that is how we are going to come to a successful conclusion.

There is a lot we need to do with regard to the challenges posed by China. They are not all negative. A lot of them can be positive. If we had Chinese investment, greenfield investment, in our country, that could help with jobs. That could help ease tensions. It is something I have been encouraging Chinese officials to do for a long time. It is in their interests. I think it is in our interests. We need to take seriously these challenges.

It is an issue. You often hear about some of the tensions or some of the conflicts that exist in this body. In my view, a lot of that is overblown. There is a lot of bipartisan work that goes on in the Senate. The vast majority of the work that goes on in the Senate is bipartisan.

One area of bipartisan agreement, I believe, is the need to focus on this very important geostrategic challenge that our country faces with regard to the rise of China. We are off to a good start in that regard. I want to encourage the administration to continue to focus on this issue and focus on these four points I highlighted this morning on the Senate floor.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO TRICIA PEEBLES AND ADRIAN DEVENY

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I want to begin by recognizing two members of my team who will be leaving at the end of this week—Tricia Peebles and Adrian Deveny—who are on to new adventures and new opportunities to make the world a better place.

Tricia has been with me on my Senate team for over 10 years—since I came to the Senate just over 10 years ago. Before that, she was with me on my team when I was speaker in Oregon for 2 years. So it has now been a dozen years of working together. From the very beginning of this wild ride, she has been with me as my State scheduler. I don't know how I could have done any of it without her.

When you are inventing a State Senate office from the ground up and you need someone with imagination, creativity, and commitment, well, Tricia has all of those in spades. Out in Oregon, she is not only the gatekeeper and defender of my schedule, she is a real advocate, making sure I connect with and hear from and work with Oregonians from all walks of life, Oregonians from every corner of our beautiful State. She has used her uncanny knowledge of the map of Oregon and small cities to get me to townhalls in each of Oregon's 36 counties year after year for 10 years straight. She has done so with military precision. Seriously, it is amazing. Name any two cities in the State, and Tricia can tell you how long it takes to drive between them, any potential road hazards, and most importantly, the nearest Subway sandwich shop so the team can stop and get a bite to eat.

It is always tough to lose an original member of a team, and I honestly don't know how we are going to fill the very large space that will be left in her absence, but I am very excited for her as she takes on her next adventure and wish her nothing but the best.

Adrian Deveny joined my office back in March of 2011. Here we are, almost 8 years later, and he has been an indispensable member of my team. In his 8 years, he has been leading our efforts to tackle the greatest challenge facing humankind on this planet—the challenge of carbon pollution and climate chaos.

He has taken us through initiatives, such as the Keep It in the Ground Act, which said that we as citizens of the United States must no longer profit from leasing out the fossil fuels that we own for extraction and combustion because it contributes to the problem, and the 100 by '50 Act, which said that we need to get to 100 percent renewable energy and that we need to do so by the

year 2050 or earlier and laid out a detailed roadmap on how to do so in each section of the energy economy.

He tirelessly advocated for programs that had real, direct impacts on people's daily lives, whether it was the Rural Energy Savings Program, which created the opportunity throughout rural America for families to upgrade the insulation in their homes and businesses to save energy and have it paid for in large part by those savings in energy, or reforming our Nation's outdated chemical laws with the significant reform of TSCA, where he played a central negotiating role to try to get us from the starting line to the finish line, or helping make electric cars more affordable.

He did all of this and so much more and always with the type of steady disposition, cheerful attitude, nothing but kind words, and support for his teammates that really helped him to be a key facilitator with staff throughout the Senate. He has been the calm in a chaotic storm of a Senate office. It will be tough to see him go, but he won't be going too far away—just moving over from our office in the Hart Office Building to the minority leader's office, CHUCK SCHUMER's office, here in the Capitol to help lead the Democratic caucus's collective efforts on issues related to energy and the environment. So our loss on Team Merkley is the Senate's gain.

A big thank-you to Adrian for all of his hard work on behalf of the people of Oregon and on behalf of a better world, a better energy policy, a better environmental policy, a policy that points at taking on the biggest challenge facing human civilization on this planet.

Thank you, Adrian, for all of your work to save our beautiful blue-green planet.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President, the most important words in our Constitution are the first three, "We the people," written in supersized font so we won't forget about the core mission of our Constitution—a nation that, in President Lincoln's words, is designed to be "of the people, by the people, for the people." Well, in a "we the people" nation, it is the responsibility of government and its leaders to put the interests and well-being of its citizens first.

In July of 1932, while accepting his party's nomination for the Presidency in the height of the Great Depression; after the stock market had crashed, losing almost 90 percent of its value; after 11,000 American banks went bust; after nearly a quarter of the United States was unemployed, Franklin Roosevelt called for "a new deal for the American people." He said that they were living in "unprecedented and unusual times" in which we must "highly resolve to resume the country's uninterrupted march along the path of real progress, of real justice, [and] of real equality."

Well, in our "we the people" Nation, we are once again finding ourselves in

unprecedented and unusual times, and a big factor is the ravages of climate chaos, carbon pollution and the chaos that ensues from that wreaking havoc not only on the environment but on the lives of Americans all across our Nation. We see it in the wildfires that are burning longer and hotter than ever before, not just affecting our forests and the jobs in our forests and our forest economies but at times incinerating entire communities, such as Paradise, CA. Even when such a dramatic event doesn't occur, there is significant damage to our cities, their economies, and their people's health from the smoke.

We have seen over time that the average number of large wildfires has grown. Back in the decade of the 1980s, there were about 140 per year. Now here we are after the turn of the century looking at nearly twice that—250 major wildfires per year on average. And the fire season has gone from roughly 5 months in the early 1970s to 7 months. This is just characterizing the impact of longer, hotter summers—one impact of climate chaos.

We also see climate chaos in the oceans. They are growing hotter year by year. They are growing more acidic year by year as carbon dioxide becomes carbonic acid, actually changing the chemistry of the ocean. We have found that the oceans are about 30 percent more acidic than they were before the Industrial Revolution, affecting our coral reefs and our shellfish.

A recent study found that the planet's oceans are heating up even faster than we anticipated—40 percent faster than we thought just 5 years ago. Now, 2018 broke the record for the warmest ocean temperatures. It beat out the previous record holder of 2017, and that 2017 record broke the previous record holder of 2016. Rising temperatures don't just harm our sea life; they are impacting citizens through impacts on the fishing industry, impacting the coastal communities for which coastal activities are their lifeblood.

I was down on the gulf coast of Florida where they had a red tide that has been in place for 10 of the last 12 months. A red tide essentially is toxic algae that produces toxins that float inland and irritate the lungs and aggravate the asthma of those living near the seashore, and it kills sea life. In addition to the toxins from the red tide, they have dead manatees, dolphins, fish, and turtles washing up on the shores and decomposing, adding to the stench. People on the gulf coast of Florida take inland vacations that at times extend to months to escape the consequence of the red tide, and it causes a huge impact on the economy of those coastal cities.

We see chaos in extreme weather events, massive storms like Harvey and Irma and Maria, which in that year cost our country \$265 billion in damages, took the lives of thousands—thousands in just Puerto Rico—and destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes in the gulf and the Caribbean.

We also see it in wild temperature swings in communities like Chicago. Last summer, Chicago experienced recordbreaking heat and then was hit with a recordbreaking polar vortex. This is climate chaos.

We the people, we the farmers, we the foresters, we the fishermen, and, of course, we the frontline communities of America, minority and low-income communities, whose health is being impacted, feel the impact, a devastating impact, and bear the brunt of climate chaos.

So it is now another time for a new deal for the American people to take on this massive, immediate threat to our people and our planet—a threat we cannot delay responding to.

This time, it must be a Green New Deal—a Green New Deal that not only transitions America to an energy economy that is powered by 100-percent noncarbon, clean, renewable energy, but a Green New Deal that creates millions of good, living-wage jobs in the process and continues our Nation's march along the path of real progress, real justice, and real equality.

Let's think, for a moment, of what the core principles are when we say the words "Green New Deal." Here are some of the core issues.

The first is an energy shift that utilizes today's technology and utilizes and improves our electric grid and our transportation system from ones powered by fossil fuels to ones powered by renewable energy. A key principle of the Green New Deal is that of an energy shift to solar and offshore wind, wave energy, tidal energy, and geothermal energy—all potentially contributing to the noncarbon electricity to power our Nation.

Here is the good news. The cost of noncarbon, nonfossil fuel energy has dropped. It has fallen about 90 percent over the last decade. It has gone from 35 cents per kilowatt hour with solar energy to about 3 to 5 cents per kilowatt hour. That is a massive change. Wind has fallen about 70 percent, and now it is down to 2 to 4 cents per kilowatt hour. What does this mean? This means that a decade ago, the costs were above the costs of burning fossil fuels. Now they are below or are even with the costs of burning fossil fuels because it is about 10 cents per kilowatt hour to create electrons from coal, and it is about 5 cents from natural gas. When you have wind at 2 to 4 cents and solar at 3 to 5 cents, you are competitive, and that means we can choose not only the energy that is best for the planet and best for our health but that is also the smartest investment for our economy.

This is where we are now. We can pursue the smartest investment. If you don't have any understanding of the impact of the climate chaos that is devastating our resources and our cities and our people, you can still choose green power, because it is the smartest economic decision.

The second core principle of the Green New Deal is to create millions of

jobs. Our President likes to talk about jobs, and we need his help in actually creating jobs by renovating our energy economy, by investing in these technologies, and by advancing these technologies. It is so we are selling them to the world rather than buying them from the world. It is so they are employing people in the United States of America rather than employing people in China. We want this revolution to be here, driven by the United States of America—by red, white, and blue ingenuity and innovation. It is not for us to be on the receiving end of technologies that are developed elsewhere, and it is not for us to be on the receiving end of products made elsewhere.

In creating these jobs, we need strong protections for American workers. We want these jobs to be living-wage jobs. We want to see workers able to organize and able to unionize so as to make sure these are family-wage jobs, because a good-paying job is better than any government program for a family's foundation to thrive.

Right now, renewable industries are booming. Jobs in solar and wind are growing 12 times faster than is the rest of the economy. Over 3 million Americans now work in renewable energy and energy efficiency, outnumbering fossil fuels 3 to 1. This is the future of jobs in the United States of America. This is the future of good-paying jobs in the United States of America. Just think of how many more jobs we can create down the road if the United States is leading the world, not following. Let's be the leaders in this green technology revolution. Like Roosevelt's New Deal with the Works Progress Administration, which created jobs that paved a path for the economy to recover, the Green New Deal will drive tens of millions of good-paying jobs for Americans in the decades ahead.

The third big principle is that no one gets left behind in this revolution. It ensures that all Americans have the benefits of the new green economy and that the hard-working Americans who are in the fossil fuel industry and have provided the power that has taken our Nation so far forward have the respect for what they have accomplished and have the opportunity for jobs in the future. It is a just transition into good-paying careers and for communities that have been stumbling in their efforts toward economic progress but have been bypassed in the economy of the past.

They will not be bypassed in the green economy of the future because the point is to design that economy so that those communities can benefit from the clean energy and can benefit from the jobs that the Green New Deal creates. That includes there being access to clean public transportation, community development investments, and the ability of low-income families to not only receive clean energy but to get the clean energy jobs and job training and apprenticeship programs and healthcare and housing that everyone in America should have access to.

Those are the three core principles of this vision. They are the three core principles that will take us forward quickly and productively and will put us in the economic lead of the world. It is a lead we are losing as we stumble—trapped by fossil fuel special interest money and its control of Congress. There are those who say this vision is too bold, that this vision is too far-reaching, but let us think of what Robert Kennedy once said: "Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly."

For the sake of our planet and our Nation and our families and the "we the people" vision of our government, let us dare, and let us dare greatly.

I thank the Presiding Officer.
The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The Senator from Missouri.

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Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk about the bill that we are considering this week. This is a bill that for sportsmen and for those who are interested in public lands is going to have a big impact. It will have big benefits for our country and big benefits for my State of Missouri.

This package includes a number of important provisions to expand hunting and fishing access—something that, I think, every Congress, over a handful of Congresses now, has tried to do and failed to do. It has provisions to protect natural resources and provisions to improve public lands. In my State of Missouri, we have more than 1.2 million hunters and fishermen. They spend about \$1.67 billion annually and support almost 30,000 jobs in our State.

For the first time, this bill makes it clear in statute that all Bureau of Land Management and National Forest System lands will be open to hunting, to recreational shooting, and to fishing unless they are explicitly closed. They can be closed, but they have to be explicitly closed for safety reasons or other justified reasons that are established not just by the Bureau of Land Management or by the National Forest System but through a public process. In other words, they are going to be open unless they are closed instead of the current situation of their being closed unless they are open. This will create an opportunity for people who want to use public lands for those purposes to be able to do so unless those who are responsible for managing those lands can make a real case that they shouldn't be able to do so.

This bill includes important provisions that will improve the visitor experience in two of Missouri's U.S. National Park Service units. One is the provision that would really enhance one's opportunity to learn more about the personal life of the Nation's 33rd President, Harry Truman. I am standing here behind the desk I use every day, which was also the desk that President Truman used when he was in the Senate.

Particularly, there are lessons that can be learned from his life at the

Harry S. Truman National Historic Site, which was first dedicated in May of 1983. It preserves the history of the person who has sometimes been called the people's President. He was the President who, when he was retiring and the press asked him "What is the first thing you are going to do when you get home?" thought for only a minute and said, "I guess the first thing I will do is take the suitcases to the attic." In his 7½ years of being President, he was a guy who had not lost the sense of the kinds of common-sense things that real people deal with.

His story is really well told at his family home in Independence. It is a site that includes not only the home that he and Bess, his wife, shared through their entire marriage, from 1919 until his death in 1972, but some adjacent family properties and some nearby properties of Truman's farm home, which was the home in which he grew up in Grandview, MO.

This is a bill that, in many cases, does really simple things. In this case, it just takes the money, frankly, that the city of Independence wants to give to the Federal Government so the Federal Government has the money to build a new visitors center. The National Park Service would like to build it on this piece of land, but before it can do that, we have to accept the piece of land. That is something that will happen in this bill when we pass it.

There is another provision that would enhance the visitor access to Ste. Genevieve, which is at least the newest historic park in Missouri if not, certainly, one of the newest in the country. This is something we did last year in transitioning some property to the National Park System from the State park system.

Ste. Genevieve, which is on the banks of the Mississippi River, was established in the 1750s by French settlers who were attracted to the area because of the water access, the rich soil, and the ability to make a living there. In fact, the historic park encompasses what was called the common field in the Mississippi River Valley, where citizens would own or be allocated a plot in that field and would farm in that plot. It was not part of the settlement community itself but was at the river bottom, which meant that for flood reasons, you wouldn't want to build a house there, but you could grow some of the most incredible crops that could be grown then or now. In fact, the common field in Ste. Genevieve is recognized as being the oldest continuously farmed piece of land west of the Mississippi River.

Ste. Genevieve had been governed by the French, then the British, then the Spanish, and then the United States in its history as it came into the United States as part of a territory with the Louisiana Purchase. The imprint of each of those countries is still evident in that community today. That is partly thanks to the State of Missouri. It is

thanks to dedicated historic preservation groups, including the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, the Foundation for Restoration of Ste. Genevieve, Les Amis, and the Ste. Genevieve Chamber of Commerce. They have all worked hard to recognize the unique architecture they have there, some of which dates back to the late 18th century. More of it dates back to the years right after the turn of the 19th century and the very early 1800s.

This bill would allow significant things to happen in that park, including acquiring a standing visitors center that wouldn't happen otherwise.

The bill also permanently reauthorizes the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Many of those hunters and fishermen whom I mentioned earlier are, appropriately, big advocates of this Land and Water Conservation Fund, which allows property to be available to them and to be preserved through this fund in a way that doesn't allow it to be developed but still to be available to hunters, fishermen, birdwatchers, and outdoor enthusiasts.

That fund is largely funded from Federal receipts from the offshore oil and gas leases. In 2018, \$487 million was appropriated by the Congress to continue to maintain and enhance that fund. It supports Federal and State land acquisition, planning grants, and outdoor recreational programs. That has been a program that, for a long time now, the Federal Government has periodically extended. This is the first time that it would be permanently authorized.

This bill reauthorizes the partners in Fish and Wildlife. It reauthorizes the National Geological Mapping Program, the Public Lands Corps program, and, for the first time, the Invasive Species Program at the Corps. The wildlife response activities, as it involves drones, are described here and defined in a new and better way.

It also requires the Fish and Wildlife Service to declare the attorney fee payments they make and, maybe even more importantly, to declare publicly the awards they make to individuals and groups that have filed a civil case and are doing that under the Endangered Species Act. A lot of determinations have been made there that the public was not aware of and, frankly, in my view, that would not have been made if they had to stand the test of public scrutiny that they now have to stand under with this law.

I want to congratulate Senator MURKOWSKI and Senator CANTWELL for bringing this bill to the floor. As we work hard now to do what is necessary, I look forward to passing it here, sending it back to the House, getting it on the President's desk, and doing these things that, in so many cases, have been years now in the making.

This bill brings together about 100 separate pieces of legislation, each of which will make an important difference—no matter how small they are—in the community or the area that they will impact.

With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last night, most of America was tuned in to the President's State of the Union Address, and I attended it with most of my colleagues in the U.S. Senate.

The State of the Union Address is an opportunity for the President, once each year, to speak directly not just to Congress but to the American people. The President had an opportunity last night to bring us together and to talk about ways we can solve the challenges facing our great Nation. Sadly, time and again, the President chose to use divisive language when he could have used unifying language.

What is the state of the Union under this President?

Affordable health insurance is at risk. Last night, President Trump said he wanted to protect healthcare for people with preexisting conditions like cancer, diabetes, asthma, and heart disease. What he did not say was that at this very moment, his administration is trying to eliminate those protections for people with preexisting conditions. That is right. A lawsuit—filed by Republican attorneys general, led by the Texas Republican attorney general—is supported by the administration and the President, and it would declare the entire Affordable Care Act unconstitutional, including those provisions that protect people with preexisting conditions. The President can't stand before us and give a speech to the American people and say: I am all about preexisting conditions—and then tell his Attorney General to join in a lawsuit and try to eliminate that protection. That is exactly what is happening at this moment.

Last night, President Trump said he wanted to help people with HIV/AIDS and children with cancer. Who could argue with those goals? But people with HIV/AIDS and children with cancer are some of the people who stand to lose the most if President Trump sabotages the Affordable Care Act.

Let me say a word about the childhood cancer issue. What a heart-breaking, tender moment it was to look up into the Gallery and see that little girl, that 7-year-old girl, who, fighting a brain tumor, was still out raising money for St. Jude's Hospital. It was beautiful, and she was just as pretty and loveable as any child can be as she applauded everyone and had what is clearly the night of her life to be at that joint session. I looked up there, and I am sure every parent and grandparent in the audience saw in her exactly what we love about little children.

Let's be honest about what the President said last night. When he said he wanted to fight childhood cancer, he said how much he would spend. That is an important thing because your values in Congress and in the government are often measured by how much you are willing to invest in your values.

The President suggested that he wanted to spend \$500 million on childhood cancer. That is breathtaking, \$500 million, until you listen to the rest of the sentence—over 10 years, so \$50 million a year. To the outsider, that may seem like a significant amount of money, but in the context of medical research, it is not.

The annual budget for the National Institutes of Health, the major medical research organization in the world, nears \$35 billion; \$50 million against \$35 billion pales in comparison. Look at this. Each year, the National Institutes of Health spends almost \$500 million on childhood cancer. I want to make sure they pay more, spend more, research more.

I thank ROY BLUNT, the Senator from Missouri—Republican Senator from Missouri; LAMAR ALEXANDER, Republican Senator from Tennessee; and, of course, PATTY MURRAY, our champion when it comes to medical research on the Democratic side. What they have done for 4 successive years is have a 5-percent real increase in medical research. That is amazing. That is almost 30 percent more being spent on medical research because this bipartisan team—which I am a cheerleader for—has done that kind of investment.

So when the President talks about, now he is going to tackle childhood cancer, I can't wait to see the next budget for the National Institutes of Health. It is Congress that has been pushing the 5-percent real growth every year, not President Trump.

So, yes, I am glad he is on board for childhood cancer. If we can help that little girl, and so many others like her each year who are battling cancer, we need to do it and put party aside, but \$50 million a year is hardly a moonshot against cancer when it comes to children. If we are going to make a massive investment to make this work, it will take a lot more of an investment than that.

For the past 2 years, President Trump has proposed cuts—cuts—in the National Institutes of Health. Mr. Mulvaney, who is now his Acting Chief of Staff, is pretty good as a budget cutter. He is not very good when it comes to investing in research. He suggested an 18-percent cut and a 6-percent cut to the very Agency responsible for medical research increases. Thank goodness, the team of Senators I mentioned to you earlier ignored the President's request and Mr. Mulvaney's directive to cut spending when it came to medical research. We need to make sure we invest in medical research for the future, finding new cures for diseases and conditions, including childhood cancer and HIV/AIDS.

The basic services of our government are at risk, unfortunately, despite the President's statement last night. You see, the President authored the longest government shutdown—35 days—in the history of the United States, and after he relented and allowed the government Agencies to go back into business and pay their employees—some 800,000 Federal employees—he dangled again the possibility that next week he will do it all over again, shut down the government again, God forbid. We have seen enough of this.

My guest last night was from Illinois. His name is Toby Hauck. Toby is head of the air traffic controllers in our State. We have almost 1,000 or more across our State. When they reached a point of 35 days with no pay, the air traffic controllers announced they would have to slow down air traffic operations across the United States.

I believe that was the decisive moment in the government shutdown. It was shortly thereafter that the President relented and said he will allow the government to reopen again. Now, he says if he doesn't get his way about his almighty wall, he is going to do it all over again. I hope he doesn't. For the good of this Nation, I hope he doesn't. For air traffic controllers, and for people who work at the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and so many other Agencies, not to mention TSA, I would hate to see them face another period of not being paid while being called into work.

Our national security is at risk at this moment too. When you look for the reasoning behind it, you can see the President's view of foreign policy is part of the problem.

I was glad to stand last night when the President recognized the heroes of World War II. Those three men—in their nineties, I am sure—really were a part of the “greatest generation.” The sacrifices they made for America, the sacrifices they made to defeat the forces of authoritarianism in Germany, Italy, and Japan have left a better world. It also led to the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization after World War II. The nations that were victorious in World War II, led by the United States, came together and said: Our goal is never to have another World War; to stop a war from breaking out again in Europe, as it had twice in the last century. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was the organization they chose to make sure we were prepared to fight communism or other forces that might lead to war. It has been dramatically successful not just in keeping the peace but in building a community of interest between the United States and Europe, which endures to this day.

I don't disagree with the President. Those who are allies should pay their fair share for NATO, but, clearly, many of those countries in Europe today wonder if the United States still has an

interest in their future, as it once did many years ago. That uncertainty, when it comes to dealing with Russia, is emphasized on a daily basis as we try to understand this President, who one day is admonishing the Russians for failing to live up to a nuclear arms treaty and the next day is ignoring Russia's cyber act of war as it tries to take over the election process in the United States. I can't follow where this President stands when it comes to Russia, and a lot of our NATO allies are curious, too, as to what he is trying to achieve.

It isn't just NATO. Beyond that, we know the President walked away from this nuclear agreement with Iran. He talked about it last night. I couldn't disagree with the President's position more. When we had the major countries on Earth come together and devise a way with inspectors to make sure Iran did not develop a nuclear weapon, that made the Middle East safer; that made Israel safer. The President opposed it from the start. Despite his opposition, President Obama was able to get it through, approved in Congress, and it became the law of the land. When the reports came back, Iran was complying with the nuclear agreement. They weren't developing nuclear weapons. They were destroying centrifuges and other equipment that could lead them to develop a nuclear weapon. Unfortunately, the net result of it was destroyed when the President stepped away from this treaty. Iran still lives by its terms, but we don't know what tomorrow might bring.

The nuclear arms race with Russia is on again because of their violation of a nuclear arms treaty that dates back to President Reagan. Instead of negotiation, we walked out and said we are just not going to live by it anymore. We need to stop a new arms race, and we need to engage China, as the President suggested last night, in that process.

I also want to say the state of our Union sees our planet at risk. This President withdrew the United States from the Paris climate accord, an agreement signed—listen carefully—by every country in the world, but it doesn't include the United States. The rest of the world—those who are political foes and friends alike—came together and said: We have to do something to make sure this planet is loveable for our children and grandchildren but not President Trump. He walked away from that. As a consequence, the United States is not doing what it should to show leadership in this critical life-or-death issue.

Finally, when it comes to America's confidence in our government, it has been shaken by a President who refuses to disclose his tax returns, refuses to be open about his business dealings around the United States and around the world, and, unfortunately, has seen a Cabinet riddled with corruption and conflicts of interest. We have never

seen anything quite like this. In the 8 years of President Obama, there were no scandals that even came close to match what is happening under the Trump administration. Is it any wonder that people are skeptical about their leadership and their commitment to the common good as opposed to their own personal gain?

The last point I will make is our economy. It is true, there are more jobs. We have had economic growth since President Obama brought us out of the worst recession since the Great Depression, and that growth and job creation is a good thing for America. I applaud it. I want to see it continue, but when we had a chance to rewrite the Tax Code in a way to help working families and those who are in the lower and middle-income categories, this Congress and this President did just the opposite, creating massive tax breaks for the wealthiest people in America. I know it is part of the Republican playbook that if the rich can just get a little bit richer, America will be better off, but it is counterintuitive. Too many working families across the United States have seen their wages—their real wages—fall behind, even though productivity and profits in corporations have increased. We have to make sure this is a fair economy when it comes to our workers and our taxpayers. Unfortunately, the President's position on taxes has not helped that in any regard whatsoever.

So last night's State of the Union Address, unfortunately, divided us instead of united us. It didn't point out the real challenges we face and need to deal with. I hope still that we can come together, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate and the House, to deal with the major challenges it faces—the challenges we were elected to confront and deal with.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I never cease to be amazed how the politics here inside the beltway remind me of two ships passing in the night, where we can all be looking at exactly the same thing and describe it in such remarkably different ways.

I have been amazed at the Democratic leader's negative comments about the President's speech last night, and I listened to comments of my friend the Democrat whip. They found virtually nothing to like about what the President had to say last night.

So I was a little bit surprised to see a CBS News poll that indicates that 70 percent of the viewers approved of what they heard in President Trump's speech last night at the State of the Union, and 72 percent said they approved of President Trump's ideas on immigration, one of the most contentious and divisive issues that faces our country.

One conclusion might be that it is because our Democratic colleagues are simply unwilling to do anything to

work with President Trump and are determined to do everything they can in order to defeat him or that anything that he happens to be for they are reflexively against. That seemed to be what gave us the 35-day shutdown, where NANCY PELOSI said that building a physical barrier along the southwestern border was immoral, even though Democrats and Republicans had routinely voted for fencing, extending the hundreds of miles there in the Secure Fence Act of 2006 and 2008. Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and Senator SCHUMER, the Democratic leader, all voted for that. Now NANCY PELOSI woke up one morning and decided it was immoral to build any physical barrier at all along the southwestern border.

I agree with those who say the real immorality here is to see the scourge of human trafficking, sex slavery, women and children being held against their will by the traffickers who transfer people up and across the southwestern border. What is really immoral is to stand by and do nothing and watch 70,000 Americans die of drug overdoses last year alone, with a significant amount of that due to opioid addiction, including the 90 percent of the heroin that comes into the United States from Mexico. To me, that is the immorality, not some fence or wall or pedestrian bridge or whatever the physical barrier may be.

I agree with those who were polled in the CBS News poll who believe that what we heard last night from the President was a strong message in his second State of the Union address. Since President Trump took office 2 years ago, the American people have seen real results and a shot of adrenalin has been given to our economy, allowing millions of Americans to get back to work.

Yes, our economy is booming. We have gotten our optimism and confidence back again. Wages are on the rise. People are getting to keep more of what they earn, and middle-class Americans are seeing their paychecks expand.

We have heard the remarkable statistics that people who have disabilities are now reentering the workforce because there is such demand for workers that even people who previously weren't able to find work are now able to get that work.

Yes, in addition to the low unemployment rate, we are seeing minority unemployment and African-American and Hispanic unemployment lower than it has ever been in recorded history. You would think that would be something that people would want to applaud on a bipartisan basis.

But time and again, we saw our friends across the aisle last night sitting on their hands with a grim and sort of discontented look on their face. That is another reason why I think so many people believe that Washington, DC, and what happens here and the politics that take place here are com-

pletely removed and disconnected from their experience across the breadth of this country.

We have done some pretty significant things in the last year together, on a bipartisan basis. We combatted the opioid crisis. We improved our criminal justice system just this last December by huge, overwhelming margins. We repealed taxes on low- and middle-class Americans, known as the ObamaCare individual mandate, punishing people simply because they could not afford the high premiums and deductibles of the so-called Affordable Care Act, and we restored much needed funding to our military in a still very dangerous world and provided an overdue pay raise for our troops.

But President Trump wasn't there just to tout his accomplishments. He was there to assure the American people that we are not going to rest on our laurels. There is still work to be done, and we are eager to get moving. The President offered up some constructive ideas about what that might be: rebuilding America's infrastructure, making healthcare and prescription drugs more affordable, and, finally, eliminating the scourge of HIV over the next decade.

I remember being at the dedication of the George Bush Library at SMU a few years ago, when they had all the living Presidents speaking at that dedication. President Jimmy Carter, surprisingly—to me, anyway—applauded President George W. Bush for saving millions of lives in Africa as a result of the PEPFAR program, providing new, incredible drugs to help reduce and eliminate the scourge of HIV in Africa. The President now wants to do that in the United States, and I applaud him for it.

To address these and other countless challenges before us, the President stressed the need for unity. As much as we would like to, nobody gets everything they want in Congress. In a country where democracy prevails, we know that means that we are going to have to negotiate and compromise, but there are 80-percent solutions that when we see them, we ought to grab them. Just turning on the news or social media, it is easy to think there is more that divides us than unites us as a country, but the President reminded us that citizens of goodwill share the same goal, and that is to build a stronger and better America.

As the President said last night:

There is a new opportunity in American politics, if only we have the courage to seize it. Victory is not winning for our party. Victory is winning for our country.

I hope all of us will answer the President's call to work together to respond to the better angels of our nature and to build on the successes of the last 2 years for the benefit of all the American people.

NOMINATION OF NEOMI RAO

Mr. President, yesterday, we had the Judiciary Committee hold a hearing to consider an important nomination, and

that is of Neomi Rao to the Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit, what some have called the "second highest court in the land." This is the seat, of course, that has been vacated by the elevation of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ms. Rao is currently the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, an obscure but important Agency—probably the most powerful Agency nobody has ever heard of here in Washington, DC. She was confirmed to that position on a bipartisan basis in 2017, and since taking the helm at OIRA, Agencies have reduced regulatory costs by more than \$23 billion, which has been another spur to the American economy.

Ms. Rao is currently an associate professor at the Antonin Scalia Law School at George Mason University and a leading scholar in the field of administrative law.

Through her career, Ms. Rao has served in all three branches of the Federal Government. She clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas on the Supreme Court and Judge Harvie Wilkinson on the Fourth Circuit. She served as an Associate Counsel and Special Assistant to President George W. Bush, and she has also worked here in the Senate as a counsel for the then-chairman of the Judiciary Committee, our friend, Orrin Hatch.

Suffice it to say that she has a vast understanding of the workings of the Federal Government, as well as the rulemaking process. In a court that frequently hears challenges to Federal regulations, her unique experience and knowledge of administrative law will be an incredibly valuable asset.

Unsurprisingly, I am not the only one who holds that view. Two dozen former Supreme Court clerks who worked alongside Ms. Rao sent a letter to the Judiciary Committee touting her qualifications. They noted:

Many of us have worked in government, at both federal and state levels, some for Democrats and some for Republicans.

They went on to say:

While our professional and personal paths have thus diverged, one of the things we have shared is admiration for Neomi. We are confident she will serve our country well on the D.C. Circuit.

We have seen similar letters from her classmates at both Yale and the University of Chicago Law School, as well as from her former students.

Adding to the list of her glowing recommendations, Ms. Rao has received a unanimous "well qualified" rating from the American Bar Association. My colleagues, Senator SCHUMER from New York and Senator LEAHY from Vermont, once referred to this rating as "the gold standard by which judicial candidates are judged."

But despite her outstanding qualifications, Ms. Rao has faced some unconvincing attacks by opponents of this administration. I am convinced that some of our colleagues would oppose any judicial nominee by this

President just because they were nominated by President Trump.

On Monday, the day before her hearing, I was surprised to see a headline from POLITICO. The story was entitled: “Dems hope to draw blood from potential Trump SCOTUS pick.” What they were referring to, I assume, is that Ms. Rao, as qualified as she is and nominated for the court of appeals, once confirmed, she could possibly in the future be a candidate for the U.S. Supreme Court. So the goal is to rough her up now, tarnish her reputation the best you can, in preparation for that potentiality in the future.

This is not entirely surprising, but it is regrettable. Before we even had a chance to hear from the nominee and discuss her qualifications for a circuit court seat, some on the other side are sharpening their claws, and the special interests are unfairly trying to undermine her nomination. This war being waged against Ms. Rao is not because she is unqualified for the job, but it is because some fear her commitment to the rule of law and speculate, as I said, that someday she might be a nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court.

A Wall Street Journal editor last week warned that Ms. Rao might get “Kavanaughed.” That is a new verb. It used to be called to get “Borked,” after Robert Bork. But of course, they said she could get “Kavanaughed” because of her writings in college newspapers more than two decades ago. So the term “Borked” has now been supplanted by the term “Kavanaughed” as a description of the scorched earth tactics of the radical left.

A young conservative at the time, her biweekly column for the Yale Herald was called “Against the Current,” and it challenged the politically correct, although poorly reasoned, views of some of her classmates at the liberal Ivy League school. I guess, when you consider what happened to Brett Kavanaugh, at least we moved on from high school yearbooks now to things that somebody has written in college. I don’t know whether that represents progress or not.

Ms. Rao has said repeatedly, however, that she no longer holds the same views she held more than 20 years ago. That is called growing up and maturing. In any event, she said she wouldn’t substitute her personal views for the laws of Congress or the precedents of the Supreme Court. Of course, the flimsy suggestion is that these articles are enough to deny her a seat on the Federal bench. The left’s attempt to block this qualified nominee by any means necessary reminds me of a comment made by Judge Kavanaugh during his confirmation hearing.

He noted that many members of the committee are taking our job of “advice and consent” to mean “search and destroy.” We have before us a highly qualified nominee with an almost unparalleled understanding of administrative law. She has received positive remarks from the American Bar Asso-

ciation, the so-called gold standard for nominees. She enjoys high praise from former colleagues and students who represent both liberal and conservative viewpoints.

I hope our colleagues can look objectively at these endorsements and all she has accomplished during her career rather than follow the radical voices down some rabbit trail. I believe Ms. Rao is exceptionally qualified for a seat on the DC Circuit Court, and I thank her for answering the call to serve despite the divisive political times in which we live.

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Mr. President, on a final matter, I am pleased that the Senate will begin consideration of the Natural Resources Management Act. This package contains more than 100 individual land bills that enjoy broad bipartisan support, with nearly 90 Senators cosponsoring various components. I believe the bill will create positive changes at the State, Federal, and local levels by improving public lands management and allowing for greater public use of America’s beautiful landscapes.

I have worked with my colleague Senator CRUZ and members of the Texas delegation in the House to ensure that two bills we introduced last Congress were included.

First, the Lake Fannin Recreation Area Conveyance Act would reduce the Federal estate in Texas and restore local control of more than 200 acres in Fannin County. The residents of Fannin County know better than the Federal Government how to care for the land, and this will allow them to utilize this land for public recreation purposes.

Also included is the Red River Gradient Boundary Survey Act, which will protect private property along the Red River, which separates Texas from Oklahoma. This will deliver certainty for Texas families who live and own land along the Red River that the Federal Government has no rightful claim to their property.

I am glad we will have the opportunity to vote on this package, which will make responsible changes to Federal land management and benefit Texans.

Mr. President, with that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). The chair recognizes the Senator from Hawaii.

NOMINATION OF NEOMI RAO

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, as a fellow member of the Judiciary Committee, along with my colleague from Texas who just spoke, it is not our job as members of this committee to cast aspersions on the motives of those of us who ask probing questions of judicial nominees for lifetime positions. Many of these nominees have very strongly held and long-held views on a number of issues that may come before them as judges, and the probing questions we ask go to whether they can separate their ideological and personal

views when they are confronted with issues they have taken public positions on and whether they can be fair and objective and follow the rule of law. Those are the kinds of probing questions we ask.

I hope that when my friend from Texas mentioned that some of us seem to—that many of us on this side of the aisle will not vote for any nominee from this President, I certainly hope he wasn’t referring to me because I have, in fact, voted for a number of those nominees.

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Mr. President, having clarified that, I want to talk about the Natural Resources Management Act that is coming before us. This is a great example of what the Senate can accomplish when we come together on a bipartisan basis to get things done.

Although we certainly have disagreements on energy and climate policy, a broad bipartisan consensus supports strengthening and expanding conservation programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund—better known as LWCF—a program whose transformative impact is felt in every State in the country.

Over the past 50 years, the LWCF has provided nearly \$250 million in funding for Hawaii to protect some of its most cherished public spaces, including Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hanalei National Wildlife Refuge, and the Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail. LWCF funding has also gone toward protecting State and private forests, as well as efforts to protect our native species and watersheds.

I saw the benefits firsthand last April when I joined Keith Unger and his family for a blessing ceremony to mark the sale of the McCandless Ranch to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Financed through the LWCF, the \$22 million purchase significantly expanded the Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge on Hawaii island.

After a slow, 45-minute ascent up the slopes of Mauna Loa, I saw a beautiful property that the McCandless family had faithfully stewarded over six generations and 100 years. According to Keith, the property’s forests “represent some of the most intact and pristine native forests in the state and provide habitat to many of Hawaii’s unique flora and fauna.”

During the time I spent with Keith and his family, their passion for the land and the plant and animal species that call it home was quite evident. Keith shared his family’s efforts to conserve and rehabilitate the alala—the critically endangered Hawaiian crow. The McCandless Ranch was the last place the alala was seen in the wild.

In the late 1990s, the McCandless Ranch entered into a conservation partnership with the Fish & Wildlife Service to protect the alala. When Keith decided to sell a portion of his land years ago, he wanted to find what he called a “like minded buyer, someone who would continue our legacy of

conservation and well managed forests. This was easier said than done. The majority of our buyer prospects were loggers or developers.” Keith and McCandless Ranch began talking with the Fish & Wildlife Service about selling a portion of their property to add to the national wildlife refuge. Through his past experience working with the Agency, he “knew that their conservation philosophy aligned with ours.”

The Fish & Wildlife Service began seeking money to acquire the property in 2011 and made it their top priority for acquisition in the Pacific region for fiscal years 2013 through 2015. Funding to acquire the McCandless Ranch became possible because of the collaborative work to develop the State of Hawaii’s “Island Forests at Risk” proposal. Developed through engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, “Island Forests at Risk” was a comprehensive proposal to protect endangered or threatened species, safeguard water resources, improve ecosystems, and preserve Native Hawaiian cultural resources. This proposal included a number of land acquisitions to add to existing national parks and wildlife refuges in Hawaii, including the McCandless Ranch addition to Hakalau.

In addition to Federal land management agencies such as the National Park Service, the Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service, “Island Forests at Risk” incorporated input and perspectives from Hawaii’s State agencies, such as the Department of Land and Natural Resources, local organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy Hawaii and The Trust for Public Land, and local landowners, such as Keith Unger with the McCandless Ranch.

Beginning in fiscal year 2016, after many meetings between myself and the principals overseeing the LWCF proposals, Hawaii’s land acquisition within “Island Forests at Risk” began to receive Federal funding. Between fiscal years 2016 and 2018, nearly \$40 million was awarded to acquire land to add to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Haleakala National Park, and Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge.

In addition to facilitating the purchase of land such as the McCandless Ranch, the LWCF also funds the Fish & Wildlife Service’s Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund. In Hawaii, we have over 500 threatened and endangered species—more than any other State. One-third of all endangered birds in the United States are found in Hawaii. LWCF funds are essential for protecting and reintroducing these species, including the alala.

The LWCF also funds the Forest Legacy Program, which helps States and private owners protect and enhance forest habitats. The program has leveraged over \$22 million of Federal funding for Hawaii’s forests over the past 30 years.

Most recently, the Forest Legacy Program helped facilitate the acquisition of the Helemano Wilderness Area on Oahu. This land includes high-quality native forests that are home to the endangered Hawaiian hoary bat and a watershed that is a primary source of drinking water for one-third of the people on Oahu.

Program funding will facilitate invasive species’ removal and reforestation. It will also provide public access to hunting and camping areas, which are limited on Oahu. Oahu is the island on which the majority of the people of Hawaii live. Eighty percent of the people live on Oahu.

Forest protection and conservation are particularly important as we face the threat of catastrophic climate change. Protecting these lands and forests can help mitigate climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide, cooling the Earth, and regenerating our watersheds.

Aside from helping mitigate climate change, the LWCF provides numerous downstream benefits to local economies. In 2003, for example, the LWCF funded the \$22 million addition of Kahuku Ranch to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park—almost doubling the park’s size.

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park is a pillar of our tourism economy in Hawaii. It contributes nearly half a million dollars every day—or \$166 million annually—to the economy and attracts approximately 2 million visitors per year. That is just one park—Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

Aside from the LWCF, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park has also benefited from programs and organizations like KUPU that educate and inspire youth to become stewards of our natural resources. KUPU provides hands-on training for youth in the areas of conservation, sustainability, and environmental education. It has also placed youth workers within various units of the National Park System in Hawaii to conduct trail repair, vegetation management, interpretation, et cetera.

The 21st Century Conservation Service Corps bill included in the Natural Resources Management Act that will come before us supports programs like KUPU that seek to nurture the next generation of environmental stewards.

In testimony before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee last Congress, KUPU CEO John Leong spoke to the transformative impact of participating in a conservation program. He cited two inspiring examples of Corps members who have gone on to do meaningful work in the environmental and conservation space. He shared the story of John Brito from Molokai, who was awarded the White House Champion of Change Award in the years following his participation in KUPU programming and who has since chosen a career in conservation. Another KUPU Corps participant, Justine Espiritu, recently helped to launch Honolulu’s popular and revolutionary Biki bike share.

More adults in Hawaii and across the country will have their own transformative experiences if we pass this legislation.

The Natural Resources Management Act also includes legislation Senators MURKOWSKI, CANTWELL, and I passed last Congress to improve our country’s capacity to monitor and respond to volcanic activity across the country.

Last year, the Hawaii Volcano Observatory, HVO, was instrumental in studying and responding to the 3-month-long eruption of Kilauea on the Big Island. The eruption devastated a number of communities, destroying more than 700 homes and displacing thousands of people, including United States Geological Survey staff and scientists who operated out of the HVO facility in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

Over the coming months and years, impacted homes, farms, and even the observatory will need to be rebuilt.

At the same time, it will be critically important to have the most updated monitoring and communications technology to alert and protect impacted communities from future events.

Our legislation will unify and connect the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory with the other four observatories across the country into one national volcano early warning system.

It will also create a volcano watch office that will operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide continuous situational awareness of all active volcanoes in the United States and its territories, including Kilauea and Mauna Loa volcanoes on Hawaii island.

Our legislation will also create a grant program for the research and development of emerging technologies for our volcano monitoring.

During yesterday’s cloture vote, the Natural Resources Management Act earned the support of 99 out of 100 Senators. I don’t know what happened to that lone Senator, but we need to bring that person in. I am eager to vote on its final passage as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

FAIRNESS FOR EVERY DRIVER ACT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, today U.S. taxpayers are subsidizing the electric car industry. The cost to these taxpayers is billions of dollars, and the subsidies have lasted now for nearly 30 years.

In 2008, Washington added a tax credit for purchases of electric vehicles. The market was very small at that time, and it was worth encouraging that market, but today the electric market for vehicles is well established. The auto industry no longer needs these pricey subsidies for electric vehicles, and I believe it is time to pull the plug on subsidies for electric vehicles.

Leading manufacturers, including General Motors, Ford, and Volkswagen, have announced plans to massively increase investment in the electric vehicle market. Global automakers are

promoting electric car luxury brands, such as Bentley, Aston Martin, Maserati, Porsche, and Cadillac, but with these new electric vehicles coming to the market, the subsidy program is going to continue to run at an enormous cost to American taxpayers.

Congress first passed legislation to provide subsidies for electric car buyers back in 1992. The purpose was to temporarily support a promising, environmentally friendly market. For decades now, Washington expanded this program of tax credits. At the same time, many States enacted similar subsidies.

Between 2011 and 2017, electric car buyers received more than \$4 billion in Federal credits alone, costing taxpayers up to \$7,500 for each vehicle. This program disproportionately subsidizes wealthy buyers because nearly 80 percent of the tax credits go to households earning at least \$100,000 a year. Well, these car buyers don't need a taxpayer subsidy.

The program has served its purpose, and I say that because today a million electric vehicles travel our highways. The global demand for electric vehicles is rising as well. Now nearly every automaker is entering the market. In fact, the U.S. Energy Information Administration projects that sales of light-duty electric vehicles will reach 4 million vehicles by 2025.

So here is exhibit A. This past weekend was Super Bowl weekend. They had so many commercials, and it cost about \$5 million to run an ad during the Super Bowl. Well, the automaker Audi ran a commercial saying that by 2025 one-third of their cars—one out of every three cars—will be an electric vehicle. So I use that as exhibit A to say this market is firmly established. As a matter of fact, this market is positioned for expansion—which means so will the cost of subsidies. I believe it is time to take taxpayers off the hook.

I have introduced legislation, the Fairness for Every Driver Act, and it is to end the electric vehicle subsidy program. My legislation has three key goals; first is to save taxpayers billions of dollars through the subsidy program; second is to help maintain our aging roads and bridges; and the third is to reduce wasteful Washington spending. According to the Manhattan Institute, ending this subsidy will save taxpayers an estimated \$20 billion dollars—\$20 billion.

The electric car market can thrive without Washington subsidies. We see it is thriving. It is growing. Nearly every State now provides its own subsidies and added incentives.

California even mandates the percentage of cars that must be zero emission. This category is almost exclusively electric vehicles. In 2017, Californians purchased 95,000 electric vehicles. Now, residents in my home State of Wyoming, where distances are long and recharging stations are few, purchased only 51. Hard-working Wyoming taxpayers shouldn't have to subsidize wealthy California luxury car buyers.

Ending the electric car subsidies isn't just about saving taxpayers dollars, it is about our shared responsibility to maintain our highway system. The highway trust fund is depleted. The highway trust fund pays for road and bridge projects. Its main source of funding is the Federal gas tax.

Drivers of gas- and diesel-powered vehicles pay this tax every time they pull up and fill up at the pump. Electric car drivers never pay these fees. Although a Tesla puts as much strain on the highways as a Ford Focus, the Tesla driver pays next to nothing to fix the roads.

Without congressional action, the highway trust fund will be exhausted by 2021. This legislation ensures all drivers pay their fair share to improve America's roads. It establishes an annual highway user fee for these alternative fuel vehicles. Comparable to the gas tax, this user fee will result in billions of dollars over the next decade to fund needed road projects.

All drivers use the roads. All drivers should contribute to maintaining them. Electric cars are here to stay. The market is poised for growth, with or without the subsidies. Congress should pull the plug on this program. It is time to end this subsidy. It is time to stop wasting taxpayer dollars, and it is time to level the playing field for all drivers when it comes to repairing our roads and bridges.

It is time to pass the Fairness for Every Driver Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I am delighted to follow on the floor the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, who is now hastening for the exit before I can say nice things about him. I want to say he represents Wyoming. We have a place called Wyoming in Delaware just south of Dover—Camden Wyoming—and I go there every week, just as he goes home to Wyoming every week.

His colleague from Wyoming is MIKE ENZI, whom our new Presiding Officer, a former Governor, is well familiar with. MIKE ENZI had something called the 80-20 rule, and the 80-20 rule goes something like this. I used to ask him: How do you get so much done with Ted Kennedy on the HELP Committee, that you now serve on, Mr. President, and he said: Ted and I agree on 80 percent of the stuff. We disagree on 20 percent of the stuff. He said: Ted and I focus on the 80 percent where we agree and we set aside the other 20 percent to another day.

So I want to just talk about the 80 percent Chairman BARRASSO and I agree on and then maybe the 20 percent we can agree to disagree until another day. I appreciate your staying here, but you don't have to. I know you have better things to do than to listen to me.

Something that is being lost in this conversation is, at least to this point

in time, there is a reason we have a policy that encourages people to buy electric-powered vehicles. There is a reason we have a tax policy and other policies to encourage people to buy fuel-celled powered vehicles that are fueled by hydrogen. The reason why is because we have way too much carbon dioxide in the air, and it is creating great challenges for these young pages who are sitting down here at your feet, Mr. President. They have a planet to worry about. I will be around for maybe 30 years or more, but I will not be here in the Senate, I assure you, for 30 years or more. They are going to be around here for, gosh, 70, 80, 90 years or more, and they have to worry about this planet, and we have to worry about this planet for them and for our own kids and, eventually, hopefully, for my wife and me, our grandchildren.

We want to make sure they have a planet to live on and to grow up on, and we have way too much carbon, and if we are not careful, it is going to continue to get worse rather than better.

Here recently, just in the last several months, we have had 13 Federal Agencies that have come together to say the situation is even more dire with respect to the threat of climate change, global warming, severe weather than we thought. A month or so before that, an arm, if you will, of the United Nations had a similar kind of report, and the forecast was equally daunting and really frightening.

So the reason we are trying to encourage people to buy electric-powered vehicles and to buy hydrogen-powered vehicles is to reduce carbon in the air.

Why do we care about cars, trucks, vans, and their emissions? The largest source of carbon emissions in this country today is not coal-fired utility plants. It is not cement plants. It is not our buildings. It is our vehicles, our mobile sources, and so that is why we focus on these issues.

The question of whether we need tax incentives forever, permanently, for electric vehicles, I think you can argue we probably don't. The battery technology in this country and this world is getting better and better.

I just want to say to the Presiding Officer who was from Massachusetts and was the Governor there for a number of years, there is a company there—and I think they are still in the Cambridge area—A123 battery, and they are one of the earlier pioneers in battery technology for vehicles and others.

My son actually was offered an internship there when he was at MIT one summer. So we have been interested in this industry for quite some time.

I go to the Detroit Auto Show just about every year. People ask: Why do you go to the Detroit Auto Show? Up until about 6, 7, 8 years ago, Delaware built more cars, trucks, and vans per capita than any State in the Nation. Think about that. More cars, trucks, and vans per capita than any State in the Nation.

We had a Chrysler plant at one time—4,000 employees in Newark, DE, near the University of Delaware. We had a GM plant—4,000 employees at one time,—very close to Wilmington, DE. We lost them both, like that, at the bottom of the great recession when Chrysler and GM went into bankruptcy, which was a huge blow to the economy of a small State, as you can imagine.

The reason I used to go to the auto show all the time in Detroit was so I would know whoever was running GM, I would know who was running Chrysler, so that if they ever thought about closing our plants, we would have somebody to call and to go see and say: You don't want to do that. We lost them both at the bottom of the great recession.

The reason I tell that story is to explain why I have an interest in the Detroit Auto Show. Eleven years ago at the Detroit Auto Show, at the beginning of the auto show on Monday—it is about a 5-day event—they have what they call the reveals, and they show all the new cars and the concept cars and everything, all the new technology. Eleven years ago, the car of the year was a Chevrolet Volt, V-o-l-t. The Chevrolet Volt is a classic hybrid. You get about 38 miles per gallon on a charge, and then it ran on gasoline for the rest of maybe 300 miles. That was the car of the year, and they sold a number of them but not huge numbers—not huge numbers.

Ten years later, about a year ago, the car of the year was the Chevrolet Bolt, B-o-l-t. The Chevrolet Bolt is a classic electric vehicle, and it gets about 140 miles—or it did at the time when it was debuted—about 140 miles on a charge, and now more than that, I think.

When I was at the Detroit Auto Show last month, we saw electric-powered vehicles from American car companies, Korean car companies, Chinese companies that get up to 250 miles per charge—250 miles per charge. That is encouraging. What it is going to do is encourage a lot of people who hadn't even thought about buying them to do that.

One of the reasons folks are still reluctant to buy them is because when you drive around the country and you have your electric vehicle or a hydrogen-powered vehicle for a fuel cell, when you are driving around, you need a place to refuel and to recharge, and you can't take the time—well, I have 6 hours to recharge my battery. People don't want to do that. They might be willing to spend 30 minutes to do that and grab something to eat, but they want to be able to recharge their batteries conveniently. They may want to refuel with hydrogen conveniently, but we don't have nearly enough places around the country. We are trying to create new corridors, densely populated corridors, places to recharge batteries and to refuel hydrogen tanks, but we have a lot of work left to do.

So you put that in sort of the mix. I think not just as Americans but as inhabitants of this planet we want to reduce carbon emissions from the largest source of carbon emissions on our planet—mobile sources.

Among the incentives for that right now—I am looking for a new car.

In my minivan, my Chrysler Town & Country, which I bought the year I stepped down as Governor, I just went over 498,000 miles this week. I promised my wife that I would buy a new vehicle when this one went over one-half million miles. I want it to be an electric vehicle, and I want it to have a great distance between charges. I want to make sure we have a lot of charging stations around, not just in Delaware but all over the country, so I can refuel that baby when I save enough money to buy it.

We have this tax credit in place for the first people who buy these cars, and then, basically, we need to make sure we have an investment tax credit around for a good while, and maybe phase it out over time, in order to encourage people and businesses and so forth—like Wawa, for example, and other gasoline stations—so they will be putting in their own money to put in those hydrogen fueling stations and the electric charging stations.

Why is this important? Here is why it is important. We used to measure our rainfall in the country by the inch; we now measure it by the foot. I was speaking with a farmer earlier today, and he told me that last year in Delaware we had twice as much rain as we normally have. They planted their crops in the spring. We raise a lot of soybeans and corn in Delaware. They planted a good crop in spring, and it was washed out. They came back after it dried out and planted a second crop again, and a couple weeks later, it got washed out from the rain, and again the third time. Finally, they just kind of gave up. They gave up, and that is not a good thing.

We had wildfires out in the great Northwest—Northern California, Oregon, Washington, Montana—this last year that were bigger than my State of Delaware.

Right here in Ellicott City, in Maryland, where they have—have you heard of the term “100-year flood”? A 100-year flood is something that occurs about every 100 years. A 500-year flood is something you would expect to occur every 500 years. In Ellicott City, MD, in the last year or so, they had two 1,000-year floods. Think about that. These are floods that are supposed to occur every 1,000 years. They had two of them in 18 months. That is not good.

It is not just Ellicott City; it happens in other places as well. We have had more category 5 hurricanes than we have ever seen. I think the last 4 years have been the hottest 4 years on our planet. We know that climate change is happening, and this is real. We see the vestiges every day, and we need to do something about it and continue to do more about it going forward.

The good thing about it is, we can do more about it and create economic opportunity. We can reduce bad emissions from cars, trucks, and vans and create economic opportunities.

The auto industry in this country has basically let it be known that they would like to see the regulation put in place by the Obama administration about 3 years or so ago on fuel efficiency standards for cars, trucks, and vans. The auto industry says: You know, we would like to have some flexibility on those standards so that the monitor requirement gets more stringent going forward under the Obama regulation. Other companies have said they would like to have greater flexibility in the near term, maybe 2021 to 2025, and the Obama regulation was silent after the year 2025. They said: We would be willing to handle greater, more rigorous standards going forward after 2025, but give us flexibility in the near term.

I think that is not a bad idea. They say that if we will do that, they can avoid a lawsuit with California and 12 other States that want to make sure California and other States have the ability to set their own fuel efficiency mileage requirements.

The auto industry doesn't want to be involved in litigation with California or anybody else in the next 5 years. They ought to have certainty about the fuel efficiency standards their cars, trucks, and vans are going to have to meet in the years to come. The reason is that they need to make huge investments, and they need a long lead time for these investments. They are competing in an international marketplace against the rest of the world. The rest of the world is going to be willing to produce very efficient electric-powered and hydrogen-fueled cars, and they want to be able to compete with them.

So here is a situation where we can do good things for our planet—clean our air with respect to climate change—and we can do good things for the auto companies.

(Mr. SCOTT of Florida assumed the Chair.)

I see our new Presiding Officer, who just slipped into his seat. He used to be a Governor, and he used to do a lot of customer calls in Florida. I have done a lot of customer calls in Delaware, asking my businesses three questions: How are you doing? How are we doing? What can we do to help?

When I ask the auto manufacturers what we can do to help, they say: Don't get rid of the electric vehicle credit. The idea of phasing it out over time might be OK—not overnight but over time.

The other thing is to make sure we put in place investment tax credits for fueling stations for hydrogen and charging stations for electricity.

The current administration does not take the threat of climate change and severe weather as seriously as the rest of us. In my State we see it every day. Delaware—which, you know, may be 70,

80 miles to our east—is the second smallest State. I like to say it is the 49th largest State in America. But we are sinking, and the seas around us are rising. If you go down the east coast as far as Florida, you will find that in Florida, especially southern Florida, they have similar kinds of problems and concerns. This is real.

What should we do about it? Well, the current administration should not lead a fight, in my judgment, to get rid of the current regulations that I described earlier and put in its place a regulation that basically says there will be little to no increase in fuel efficiency standards as we go forward. I just don't think that is smart, and, in the auto industry, that is not what they are asking for. They are asking for near-term flexibility, longer term certainty, and more rigorous standards. They think that would be good for their bottom line, and they could sell more vehicles.

We had a committee hearing yesterday—actually a markup and business meeting in the Environment and Public Works Committee for the nomination of Andrew Wheeler to be the Administrator of the EPA. We haven't had a Senate-confirmed Administrator for just over—about 1 year, maybe a little more than 1 year.

Scott Pruitt was the first EPA Administrator for this administration—not a friend to the environment and someone who turned out, I think, to be ethically corrupt. He is gone, and Andrew Wheeler is the Acting Administrator; he was the assistant administrator. He has been nominated by the President to be the Administrator for the EPA.

I didn't realize this a couple months ago, but when somebody is in a position like this, when they are the assistant administrator—in this case the EPA—and the person who leaves as the Administrator leaves a vacancy, the President can appoint the assistant administrator as the Acting Administrator. It is kind of like a promotion but in an acting form. That is good for 210 days. Sometimes you may have a situation in which someone is not the assistant administrator of the EPA or an Agency but is just plucked out of the air by the President and plopped in as the Acting Administrator. That person doesn't have 210 days—a period in which they can stay there and do the job as Acting Administrator. Andrew Wheeler does. For all intents and purposes he will be the Administrator in an acting capacity for 210 days.

So we are saying to the administration, to our colleagues on the Environment and Public Works Committee, there is no real need to rush through the nomination until we resolve our differences in a couple of areas, and one of those areas deals with emissions from mobile sources, the greatest source of carbon in our air.

Another issue we have a lot of interest in—the automobile industry does; so does the utility industry; so does the

Chamber of Commerce—is a regulation from the last administration that was actually promulgated in 2012. It is called MATS, mercury and air toxics standards. The mercury and toxics standards regulation, basically put in place in 2012, says to the utility industry: You have to reduce your emissions of mercury by 2050.

Why do we care about mercury emissions? Because if you are a pregnant woman and you ingest fish with large amounts of mercury, you may do serious damage to your unborn child. It can also do serious damage to the life of the woman, but the real concern is brain damage for unborn children because of high levels of ingestion of mercury by pregnant women of child-bearing age.

We are not talking about something that affects 100 or 1,000 women a year. We are not talking about tens of thousands but literally hundreds of thousands of people who are at risk. So we have in place a MATS mercury and air toxics rule. It was adopted in 2012. The utility companies initially said: Well, we don't like that. We don't want to do that.

Guess what. They did—and at one-third of the cost they expected. It was implemented more quickly than they expected, and the health benefits are greater than they expected.

Now the utility industry, including the rural electric co-ops, including their trade association for utilities, chamber of commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, a whole host of environmental groups and clean air groups—everybody said: Well, we know this MATS rule, the mercury and air toxics rule we are familiar with, and we are complying with it. It is OK. Leave it alone.

The current administration wants to take some steps that would really undermine the ability to uphold that 2012 regulation in a court of law. They are saying they are not doing that, but actually that is the effect of what they are trying to do.

In order to move expeditiously on the nomination of Andrew Wheeler to be the Administrator of EPA, we want to make clear that the mercury and air toxics standards rule does not go away. We are going to comply with what the industry has asked us to do.

The third front I will mention is HFCs—we are really good with acronyms—hydrofluorocarbons. We have refrigerants, and we all have air conditioning in our cars and homes—most of us. We used to use perfluorocarbons in the cooling systems, in our refrigerator systems. They have created real problems for the environment and the atmosphere.

The follow-on product was called HFCs, hydrofluorocarbons. We found this was better for the atmosphere, better for the environment—but not great—and American companies, American technologies have come up with another product to replace HFC. That form of technology is American-owned,

and American technology creates American jobs.

We need to adopt and pass a treaty in this country called the Kigali treaty, which makes it clear that the current HFCs, which are coolants for refrigerants, are still a problem, but they can be phased out, and this new technology by American companies can be phased in to take its place. This involves job creation in this country. We are not talking about a couple of hundred jobs; we are talking about thousands of jobs—good-paying jobs in this country, bringing economic value to American companies—not measured in millions of dollars but billions of dollars every year. It is there for us.

This is a situation in which American technology can do good things for our environment, for our atmosphere, for our air, and at the same time create jobs, American jobs using American technology.

I might mention one more, something called—and I just want to say that the EPA is standing in the way of the administration's submitting for our approval in the Senate this treaty called the Kigali treaty. Apparently, the State Department wants to submit the treaty for our consideration. The Commerce Department wants to submit the treaty for our administration, and the EPA is standing in the way. I don't really understand why, but before we move expeditiously on the nomination of Mr. Wheeler, the administration should say: OK, we are not messing with the treaty.

Most of the administration thinks they ought to submit it, and, frankly, so do the rest of us. It is one of those deals, again, that is good for environment, good for public health, creates jobs—win-win.

The last one I want to mention is PFOA. I wish I can tell you what it stands for, but it is a long name. One of the things we found out is that in places where we have military bases—where we have firefighting equipment for planes, air crashes and so forth, and we use that type of firefighting equipment—sometimes the water runs off the tarmac, off the runways and the parking areas, and it gets into groundwater and creates problems with our drinking water. These are substances that are known carcinogens, and we have seen in places around the country—including places like West Virginia, where I was born, and North Carolina, where my wife is from—this is a real problem. We are not saying—nobody is saying, at least to my knowledge—that it ought to be completely banned. This family of elements, the PFAS and PFOA—we are not asking for a ban; we just want a clean water drinking standard established by the EPA. That is what we want in 2 years—not today, not tomorrow, but in 2 years, creating clean water so that people can be protected.

Those are four things we are asking for the administration to take action on and to make clear. To the extent it

does, we are then prepared to move forward on the nomination, right here, for Andrew Wheeler. My guess is, he will get confirmed, but I think it is important for us to address those particular issues.

At the end of the day, we will improve the quality of life for the people in our country. At the same time, we will create jobs. That is a great combination. It is a real win-win. We can seize the day and win on behalf of our young people and our not so young people. At the same time, we can create a lot of jobs and enhance economic activity. We ought to do that. If we do, the EPA will end up with an Administrator—one who will be a lot better than the last one. Let's do that.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield to my friend, the chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator GRASSLEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

REMEMBERING ERNIE FITZGERALD

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I pay tribute to an extraordinary American. I stand here today to pay my respects to a World War II veteran who dedicated his life to public service.

After serving his country in uniform in the Navy, this gentleman from Alabama served the American people as a civil servant. For more than four decades, he was a tenacious watchdog who chased down fraud, waste, and abuse at the Pentagon. A hero for taxpayers and a war hero against waste, Ernie Fitzgerald recently passed away at the age of 92. I, today, sing the unsung praises of this remarkable champion of whistleblowers.

He was a fiercely independent watchdog. He was one of the rarest of breeds. He brought an uncommon devotion to his work. He prevailed against the muzzles of many of his handlers whom he called "over-dogs." They used to try and silence him. He prevailed over those muzzles—it didn't work—because when Ernie sniffed wrongdoing, he would sink his teeth in and never let go. He was a bulldog. His superiors squirreled him away in a farflung cubbyhole at the Pentagon. Basically, they exiled him to the Pentagon's attic. The big dogs at the Pentagon didn't want this watchdog's work seeing the light of day.

As Americans, we are blessed to have constitutional protections for freedom of speech and freedom of the press. These beacons of liberty worked to Ernie's advantage. Our system of checks and balances also helped to make sure wrongdoing was never swept under the rug.

Throughout my public service, I have paid close attention when I have gotten a whiff of wrongdoing. I have learned that a pervasive stench is often not far behind. As a lifelong Iowa farmer, I know what a load of manure really smells like. So when I ran into a bit of institutional gridlock in my efforts to freeze the defense budget back in the early eighties, I wanted to talk to a

pair of analysts at the Pentagon. Their efforts exposed the Federal money hose that showered unbridled tax dollars over bloated defense contracts.

Ernie Fitzgerald and a fellow named Chuck Spinney aren't household names, of course, but their crusade to fix the fiscal mess at the Department of Defense has inspired this Senator to conduct robust oversight over the last four decades. Ernie's body of work has helped me to derail the Pentagon's gravy train.

Do you remember back three decades ago—and there are probably examples today—when there were \$450 hammers, \$640 toilet seats, and \$7,600 coffee pots? Those were real items, and those were real figures. Those pricetags for spare parts gave taxpayers sticker shock and ought to have for good reason. Americans know the price of everyday household items. They sure know what a hammer or a toilet seat costs at their local hardware stores.

As Ernie Fitzgerald explained, Americans aren't expected to know what a B-1 bomber or an F-15 fighter should cost, but when you add all of that up, you get a boondoggle of "overpriced spare parts flying in close formation." Those were Ernie's words. Ernie's fiscal forensics uncovered mountains of mismatched receipts and invoice gaps that left taxpayers footing the tab for rampant waste and unchecked spending sprees. Ernie Fitzgerald was a sleuth for truth. His quest gave Pentagon officials heartburn. His work gave me the leverage I needed in Congress to enact an across-the-board spending freeze, but I am getting a bit ahead of Ernie's story.

For the record, Arthur Ernest Fitzgerald was a patriot, a whistleblower, and a watchdog. He had a heart of gold, but it was as tough as nails. He outmaneuvered top military brass by getting down to brass tacks. He was a gentleman's gentleman who had a big southern drawl and a bone-deep genetic allegiance to the truth. In fact, his allegiance to the truth was a big bone of contention between him and those on the highest rungs of power of the U.S. Government—from the President of the United States to the most highly decorated brass in the U.S. military. Ernie had uncommon courage to stand up for the truth at great expense to his career. He put integrity and pride above saving his own hide. He spoke truth to the powers that be, and he lost his job for doing it.

As I mentioned, our acquaintance started during my first term in the Senate. I was awfully wet behind the ears. I was a dyed-in-the-wool fiscal conservative. At the same time, I was cutting my teeth as a congressional watchdog. Ernie Fitzgerald, at that time, was on a short leash at the Pentagon in his having been rehired—can you believe this?—under court order after having been fired for having blown the whistle on fiscal mismanagement at the Pentagon. That is how whistleblowers were treated then, and they are treated the same way today.

I remind my colleagues and the American people where Ernie's earnestness for truth landed him. The 37th President of the United States referred to Ernie Fitzgerald in those infamous Watergate tapes. You know who that was—Nixon. In Ernie Fitzgerald's quoting of Nixon, Nixon said: "Get rid of that SOB." Those marching orders were delivered after Ernie spilled the beans at a Joint Economic Committee hearing on November 13, 1968. He testified before Senator Proxmire's panel that taxpayers were on the hook for a \$2 billion cost overrun on the C-5 aircraft. For this transgression of truth-telling, he was fired by the Air Force.

Let me be clear. Ernie Fitzgerald lost his job for committing the truth, and that reveals the big-time risk whistleblowers face even today if they step forward to expose wrongdoing.

Thanks to Ernie's characteristic resilience, sheer determination, and our system of checks and balances, Ernie got his job back. He filed a lawsuit that made its way through the courts. It took a dozen years for him to get his job back. On June 15, 1982, Ernie returned to work at the Pentagon but in the attic of the Pentagon. That was 14 years after he testified about the C-5 and its \$2 billion cost overrun. Although Ernie held a very senior position in the Air Force—with the job title of Management Systems Deputy—at the Pentagon, he was kept at arm's length. His job description was spelled out in a court order, but he was never allowed to do that job that the court said he ought to have had.

That is how whistleblowers are treated. You ignore them. You put them in the attic. They go nuts. He was treated as an outcast, as I am sure I am demonstrating to you. He was snubbed by his superiors and was left to his own devices to make a difference.

Once again, the genius of our system of checks and balances came into play. Ernie was not snubbed by this U.S. Senator. In fact, we discovered we shared a bone-deep genetic aversion to waste. Like many Midwesterners, I don't like to waste time or money. That is why, as a U.S. Senator, I try to keep a tight-fisted grip on the Federal purse strings. It is why, as a taxpayer watchdog, I take oversight work very seriously. Every Member of Congress has a constitutional duty to conduct oversight—every Member of Congress. We need the eyes and ears of whistleblowers to root out the truth. That is why I want to hear what whistleblowers have to say.

As a new Senator in a Republican administration, the Reagan administration, I previously mentioned my proposal to enact a yearly across-the-board budget freeze. An across-the-board spending freeze guarantees shared sacrifice. I wanted to make sure it could be done without harming national security, so I needed answers from people who could tell the truth. I called on the Secretary of Defense at that time, Weinberger, and asked if I

could talk to a Pentagon budget analyst named Chuck Spinney. I was told, yes, he could come to my office.

It turns out the Pentagon didn't want Chuck Spinney, a civil servant, briefing me. At that time, I had an orange Chevette, so I jumped in it and drove from the Capitol over to the Pentagon. Even then, Chuck Spinney was not allowed to see me. As I watched the Pentagon disappear in my rearview mirror, I thought the Pentagon was making a mistake, though I didn't realize the publicity blunder it would turn out to be. What I did know was that one way or another, this Senator was going to talk to that civil servant, Mr. Spinney, whom the Pentagon didn't want me to talk to.

Six weeks later, Chuck Spinney testified before a standing-room-only joint hearing of the Senate's Budget and Armed Services Committees. It was held in the ornate Russell caucus room. Chuck Spinney exposed the mismanaged fiscal mess at the Department of Defense. The Pentagon was front-loading the budget, effectively stuffing 10 pounds of manure into a 5-pound sack. The following Monday, Chuck Spinney's photo was on the cover of TIME magazine.

The next time I wanted more answers about ongoing fiscal mismanagement at the Defense Department, I took a second road trip, in my orange Chevette, to the Pentagon. This time, I wanted Mr. Ernie Fitzgerald to testify before my subcommittee. Needless to say, the Pentagon didn't roll out the red carpet for me, but there were about 50 members of the press crammed into Ernie's attic cubbyhole to witness this U.S. Senator handing Ernie Fitzgerald a subpoena.

Courageous truth-tellers can make all the difference, and Ernie was such a courageous truth-teller. Ernie's evidence showed that contracting waste was bloating defense budgets and not beefing up military readiness. Instead, they were padding contractor profits at taxpayers' expense.

Ernie Fitzgerald's pursuit for truth is one of the primary reasons I also worked to strengthen whistleblower protections. What I like to call committing the truth often comes with a steep price.

Whistleblowers, like Ernie Fitzgerald, put their jobs, their livelihoods, and their reputations on the line. The pressure in this bureaucracy and in this government to "go along to get along" is entrenched in a culture in both the public and private sectors, but, of course, it is a way of life in the Pentagon.

In the late 1990s, I borrowed Ernie for a couple of years to work in my Senate office. He was assigned as an Air Force representative and expert who worked side by side with my staff. Together, we investigated vendor payments and bookkeeping, particularly in the Defense Finance and Accounting Services. This was in their accounts payable operations. It was tedious and time-con-

suming work, but Ernie Fitzgerald's unwavering work ethic was up to that task to restore the public trust.

Ernie Fitzgerald never minced words. He attributed lax procurement rules and, of course, cronyism as the reasons the taxpayers were being fleeced, and he was bound and determined to stop these shenanigans. As Ernie once said, "government officials, from the majestic office of the president to the lowest, sleaziest procurement office, lie routinely and with impunity in the defense of the system."

In 1998, Ernie testified at a congressional hearing I conducted to examine two audits freshly prepared by what was then called the General Accounting Office. The hearing was called "License to Steal: Administrative Oversight of Financial Controls at the Department of Defense."

The audits revealed nonexistent internal financial controls. Basically, the Defense Department's bookkeeping system was on auto pilot. It allowed for a freewheeling spending spree. The absence of basic financial controls fostered fraud, outright theft, and mismanagement of tax dollars. It was a story of rinse and repeat. Costly accounting errors were masked by a fundamentally flawed payment system that can't be audited, even today.

Working from within this bureaucratic behemoth, Ernie Fitzgerald devoted his life to exposing the abuse of power within the military-industrial complex. Outsized, but not outmatched, Ernie Fitzgerald evokes the image of David versus Goliath. At the height of the Cold War, he helped to freeze a galactic defense buildup and shielded taxpayers from massive, unaccountable expenditures.

America owes a debt of gratitude to this now-deceased Ernie Fitzgerald and to the brave work of whistleblowers who will follow in Ernie Fitzgerald's legendary footsteps. These courageous truth-tellers risk everything to shed light on wrongdoing.

Ever since I met Ernie Fitzgerald and came to know the bureaucratic stonewalling that he fought against, I have worked to empower and protect whistleblowers. Transparency brings accountability.

Since passage of the bipartisan Grassley-Berman updates to the False Claims Act way back in 1986, the Abraham Lincoln-era antifraud tool is credited with recovering nearly \$60 billion back into the Federal Treasury, and they are still counting, at an average of about \$3 to \$4 billion a year. The Department of Justice has called it the government's single, most effective antifraud weapon that it has in its arsenal. I am told my amendments effectively deter hundreds of billions of dollars of fraudulent activity.

As long as I am in this Senate, I will continue to work to keep the False Claims Act razor sharp and to strengthen whistleblower protections. I will always remember the good work of Ernie Fitzgerald and lots of others like

him who kept their nose to the grindstone to do simply what is right.

Ernie Fitzgerald's long march for the truth teaches us that it requires constant vigilance to weed out a deep-rooted culture of cronyism, from the military-industrial complex to Big Pharma and elsewhere.

As cofounder of the Senate Whistleblower Protection Caucus, I will work to see that the mission of truth-tellers is protected for generations to come. I will continue to work to strengthen sunshine laws, whistleblower protections, and enforcement of the Inspectors General Act.

The inspector general of the Justice Department called whistleblowers the "lifeblood" of his organization's work. I completely agree.

I will long remember the genteel southern drawl and the charm of my friend Ernie Fitzgerald. I am glad I was able to visit him in person at the Sunrise Nursing Home in Falls Church, VA. He leaves behind a legacy of truth that ought to encourage every American to stand up for what is right and what is just.

Like many whistleblowers, Ernie Fitzgerald took the road less traveled. In the words of Robert Frost, "that has made all the difference."

In closing, Barbara and I extend our condolences to Ernie's peers, friends, and family members. I bid this faithful public servant a fond farewell with a Scripture message that he shared with me from time to time. He understood that when the going got tough, the tough got going. To my departed brother in Christ, may the words of John 8:32 carry him to life everlasting: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Wyoming.

STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, last night we heard from the President of the United States in his State of the Union Address. What I heard and what I know, living in Wyoming and traveling across my State and across the country—is that the state of the union is strong. It is strong, and we are strong militarily, economically, and politically.

It is so fascinating to see this growth that we have in our economy. I remember just a few years ago when the new normal for economic growth was stuck below 2 percent. People said: That is where we are going to be.

Well, as a result of tax cuts and regulatory relief, we have had an incredible amount of economic growth over the last couple of years. Really, the economy is sizzling, firing on all cylinders, fueled by the tax cuts that are allowing people to keep more of their hard-earned money, and wages going up because there are so many jobs being created.

Talking about the good news for the American people, I just noted that there were 3 million new jobs added

since Republicans passed tax reform a year ago. That is 3 million new jobs across the country.

Somebody might say: Well, maybe it is slowing down. It is actually the opposite. This past month, there were 304,000 new jobs. The experts, who thought they had a handle on the economy, said: Well, maybe there are 160,000 new jobs.

There were 304,000, not just 160,000, as it was estimated. There have been 3 million new jobs since we passed tax reform for the American people.

The other thing that is so interesting with the numbers is the increase in manufacturing jobs. I remember President Obama saying that you would need a magic wand to bring back manufacturing jobs to the country. Well, the number of manufacturing jobs that were brought back to the country or that were created in the country last year was the largest growth in over 20 years.

Now, what about wages? Wages are up significantly, compared to a year ago. People are noting not only an increase in their salaries but also an increase in their take-home pay because the amount of taxes taken out are going down as well. So you have higher salaries, lower taxes, and the amount of money that people are able to keep is going up as well.

More people are working today than at any time in our history as a nation. There are 157 million American workers, and workers are in the driver's seat. There are more jobs available than there are people to fill those jobs.

I am so happy with what President Trump has done with regulations to try to eliminate these burdensome, expensive, and time-consuming regulations that made it harder to create jobs, harder to keep jobs going, and harder to keep people in their jobs.

I was most pleased to see the President's focus and discussion on energy. Energy is called the master resource. It is called the master resource for a reason. It fuels our economy, it fuels our military, and it fuels our Nation.

We now have, through innovation and investment, enough energy resources that we have now become a net exporter of energy. People around the country and around the world look to us as a source of energy—crude oil, natural gas, and liquefied natural gas. There are opportunities for people around the country—coal from my home State of Wyoming. We are a net energy exporter, and it is because of the President's focus on allowing us to use the resources that we have been so blessed with in this great country.

As for this talk about 3 million new jobs, in Wyoming alone there have been 8,000 more jobs created since we passed tax reform.

The Wall Street Journal editorial board's headline this past Friday, February 1, was this: "Sorry for the Good News." It said: "This is what happens when the political class takes its boot off of the neck of private business, as

the GOP Congress and Trump administration did for two years."

That is why we have all this good news. Taxes are lower. Regulations are much more reasonable. They are not the kind of troublesome regulations that choked our economy.

I think now it is time to refocus, as the President talked about—a time for greatness in America, to refocus our attention on economic expansion.

When I hear my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, they have taken a hard left turn, way off to the liberal side, to the radical side of things, proposing socialist programs that increase taxes, that increase government spending, and that apply burdensome new regulations. That would put a tremendous brake on the economy and the economic growth we have seen. These hard-left policies will kill job creation and cripple the economy.

Americans want more freedom, more opportunities, more economic prosperity, and better paying jobs. That is what this is all about. That is what we heard last night in the State of the Union. That is why the state of our Union is strong, with a strong, healthy, and growing economy. It is time—and I agreed with President Trump last night—to unite, time to work together and keep the country moving forward with commonsense policies that improve Americans' everyday lives.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, today I rise to speak on the strength of the U.S. economy, and I would like to thank my colleagues who have joined me here on the floor to address this very important topic.

As President Trump said in last night's State of the Union, "Our economy is thriving like never before."

Last Friday's January jobs report was a continued good-news story, with 304,000 new jobs added just last month. It is also an example of how Republican pro-growth policies are getting people back to work. Job growth was strong across most sectors, including manufacturing, where 261,000 jobs were created over the last year.

Just as important, this economic growth has put upward pressure on wages, with the average hourly pay increasing by 3.2 percent from last year. Lower wage workers saw some of the biggest increases. This means more money in your pockets to put food on the table and provide for growing families.

The tight labor market has drawn workers off of the sidelines, and that is a good thing. Folks who have been unemployed or underemployed are finding work, and those seeking to shift to a better paying job or one with better hours that is closer to home are finding those opportunities.

Nowhere is the power of this job creation more evident than in my home State of Iowa, where the 2.4-percent

unemployment rate is the lowest in the Nation. There are 64,000-plus jobs currently open in Iowa. Over 1.6 million Iowans are employed, which is the most in our State's history. Every time I meet with an employer from my home State, they tell me about the challenges of filling jobs in order to keep their businesses running. They want to hire people, and business is booming. Under Republican pro-growth policies and the leadership of Governor Kim Reynolds, Iowa's economy continues to expand, and wages are increasing across the State.

I also agree with the President that "no one has benefited more from our thriving economy than women, who have filled 58 percent of the new jobs created in the last year." Women are also becoming small business owners at increasing rates across Iowa. These "girl bosses" are creating jobs and helping Iowa's economy to rumble. Yes, ladies, Iowa is the place to be.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act has allowed Iowa's job creators to invest in their workers and grow their businesses. For example, a business in Dyersville, IA, invested 75 percent of its tax savings last year into its employees, giving \$800 bonuses to the 162 full-time workers. One of its employees said she planned to put her bonus into her retirement fund—an investment in her future.

Furthermore, cutting redtape and scaling back burdensome regulations have led to a surge in small business optimism. A December survey from the Iowa Association of Business and Industry found that 97 percent of respondents planned to make capital expenditures this quarter, while a majority expected to add new employees and 72 percent expected to see sales growth.

Recent achievements—from opioid abuse efforts to criminal justice reform—will help transform our job pool to help fill the needs of today and tomorrow, helping people get back on their feet and back to work.

I also know that millions of working mothers, fathers, grandparents, and families across the country struggle with the realities of childbirth and infant care while working hard to raise strong and healthy families. It is long overdue that Congress not just have a conversation on these matters but that we get serious about a path forward on a paid leave approach. I am glad the President highlighted this issue in the State of the Union last night. Some are fortunate enough to have paid benefits provided by their employers, but many families in America do not have that luxury.

For the past few months, I have been working on this issue with my colleague, Senator MIKE LEE. Helping families is an issue we can all agree on, and I hope we can have a productive dialogue on how Congress can best help in a way that keeps our economy strong.

Simply put, when Washington gives power back to Main Street, American families win.

Sadly, over the last few weeks, I have heard my Democratic colleagues propose a Green New Deal that would raise energy prices for consumers by as much as \$3,800 per family a year and proposals to impose tax rates as high as 70 percent. If allowed to move forward, these proposals would reverse some of the economic progress we have seen. They would change our Nation's direction from freedom, innovation, and job facilitation to more heavy-handed regulation. This far-left agenda offers little for small businesses seeking to grow to bigger ones, families seeking to increase their take-home pay, or workers trying to climb the ladder to full economic success. That is not a future that looks bright to me, and it isn't one that gives Americans a path toward prosperity.

I am very proud of our achievements, and I am thankful for the leadership of the President and folks willing to work together to get our economy moving. There is more work yet to be done, and I look forward to seeing our economy continue to achieve new heights.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, I rise today in one of the hottest economic environments our Nation has ever seen. The last time American unemployment was this low, the Beatles were at the top of the charts and I was a starting forward on the JV basketball team back in Jasper, IN. The last time U.S. stocks had a January as good as this last month, the Hoosiers were on their way to a national championship under Coach Bobby Knight.

Last night, President Trump outlined the incredible economic success and progress our country has made in the last 2 years, and it is times like these that drive home the point that we all already know: Business is the engine that drives the American economy, not government. Entrepreneurs—from titans of large industry to mostly Main Street entrepreneurs—are the force that generates prosperity, not politicians. America's true power is held in our local chambers of commerce, not in the Chambers of Congress. Our best wisdom comes from the factory floor, not the Senate floor.

Businesspeople understand what makes the economy tick, and with someone like President Trump at the helm, the true potential of the American economy is being unleashed. GDP and job growth numbers have never been like this.

During the Obama administration, these numbers were scoffed at as not being attainable. Now it is happening. We have to keep that in mind. President Obama offered us 8 years of stagnation and cynicism. President Trump has offered optimism, bold leadership, and the deep understanding of what makes a business boom that could only come from the experience of somebody from the real world, an entrepreneur.

Like the President, I built my life in business over many years. I started

back in 1981 with just a few employees. Our original office was in a mobile home on a rock lot—a very hard-scrabble existence. I think of all the time invested. For 17 years, we hovered as a small business. Patience and persistence underlie everything that really works in this economy and in this world. We lived within our means, and we reinvested in our own success in good times and bad. And this story is being played out across the country.

President Trump's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is the most significant pro-growth legislation that has come out of Washington since I have been paying attention. As I said, that has been 37 years. For my company, the Trump tax cuts were the biggest capital infusion we had ever seen.

Like the President, I have been blessed in that three of my four kids work in my business. When tax reform was signed into law, I believe back in December of 2017, one of my sons came to me and said: Dad, we need to take these savings—we are sending less to DC. Let's do something with them.

I said: What did you have in mind?

He said: I would like to share these benefits with our employees.

I said: Well, particularly, what did you have in mind?

He said: I would like to raise 401(k) benefits. I would like to start quarterly bonuses.

We always did an end-of-the-year bonus.

He said: I would like to cut family healthcare costs by \$1,400 per family.

We had held them flat for 9 years.

I said: Wow, I wish that had been my idea. I like it.

He said: The other thing is, I would like to put in the company memo that this is due to tax reform.

I entered politics long ago—I was on a school board for 10 years, 3 years as a state legislator—and I knew you had to be careful when you mixed business with a political statement. I asked him to talk it over with his brother, who I thought might want to just give the benefits and not make a political point out of it.

He said: Dad, you are the CEO. What do you think?

I said: Put in the company memo that this is due to tax reform. As conservatives, we need to be proud of it.

That is exactly what we did.

Regulatory cuts and tax reform are never going to make headlines, but Americans are seeing the results in real dollars and cents in their paychecks and their 401(k)s. It is clear that when government gets out of the way of enterprisers, the rising tide of prosperity lifts all ships.

If my fellow Republicans and conservatives ever want to win again, it is incumbent upon us to make the case that this economy is due to the fact that the administration and the Republican Congress created the stage for this economic boom that we are within. It is also incumbent upon employers across the country to make sure you

share these benefits with your employees. If that is not done, we are going to waste an opportunity.

The reason this is so critical is that there are a lot of folks who have a different point of view. The Democrats have a proposal that basically is this: more taxes, more debt, probably more regulations, and taking steps down the pathway, I think, to a socialist catastrophe like the daily horrors we see in Venezuela, embracing a failed ideology that has not worked anywhere else.

Promising free college, free insurance, and never being able to pay for it may be a good way to win votes in 2020, but it is no way to run a country. Sooner or later, somebody gets stuck with the bill. If we fail to confront this creeping threat to our free market principles now, our children and grandchildren will pay dearly.

Again, it is so incumbent upon us to take this opportunity and run with it as business owners so we can put it into practice where everybody is feeling the benefits beyond what they have so far. If we want to keep President Trump's economic rally going, create more opportunity for Americans to live their America dream, and make the clear choice between pro-growth policy and a dissent toward socialist calamity, more business people, as well, need to step out of their comfort zone and run.

Try to become a State legislator. Get involved. Run for Congress. Run for the Senate.

I did it out of nowhere, when nobody thought it could be done. If we want our system to work the way it should when it works best for all, we need to make sure that message is getting heard. Let's keep it booming. Let's keep this thing going. Participate. Get involved.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The Senator from Georgia.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, it is my honor to join my colleagues, including the Presiding Officer, in this brief colloquy about the current economic results that the President's agenda is achieving. I would like to put it in perspective though.

Just a little bit over 2 years ago, we had suffered through 8 years of probably the most onerous increase in big government regulatory reform that we had ever seen. These regulations were so onerous that they basically shut down free enterprise for a decade. Add to that a tax environment that was not competitive with the rest of the world, and the result was that we had the lowest economic growth in United States' history—1.6 to 1.9 percent, depending on whom you believe. Regardless of that detail, it was absolutely uncontested that it was the lowest economic growth in the United States' history. There was no secret behind that.

Actually, in 2009, when the last administration started, the economy was

at a low point because of the financial crisis. So they started from a very low point to start with. It is more draconian than the numbers indicate.

Two weeks after President Trump was elected, I was included in a leadership meeting in the White House to talk about how we are going to achieve the President's No. 1 objective, and that is to grow the economy. He said during the election and, indeed, during that meeting, that job one was to grow the economy. We had to put people back to work, get enthusiasm back, and get confidence in the U.S. economy again and in each other. In that meeting, we outlined, basically, what was required to do that. President Trump gave us his vision of what we had to do.

We wanted to work on regulations, energy, taxes, and, indeed, pull back on as much of the Dodd-Frank bill as we could. Those things in the first year were intended to get the economy jump-started. Then, in the second year, we were supposed to talk about immigration, infrastructure, and trade.

History will show that in the first year, more than 870 regulations were reversed. We unleashed our energy potential in two major projects: ANWR in Alaska and the Keystone Pipeline. Those benefits are even yet to come.

Thirdly, we passed a historic tax bill that made the United States more competitive with the rest of the world. We lowered the corporate tax rate. We changed the individual tax structure. We eliminated the repatriation tax.

The next thing was so important. We actually passed a bipartisan bill that pulled back on the most draconian parts of the Dodd-Frank bill. The Dodd-Frank bill was a knee-jerk reaction from the financial crisis in 2008 and 2009. It really did put regulations in place that pulled back on the banking industry in many ways. Some of those, we might argue, were required. Certainly, on the money banks in New York, some things were needed. I would argue that not the full breadth of what Dodd-Frank did, but that is an argument for another day.

Last year, we got 17 of my Democratic colleagues in this body to agree that a minor adjustment in the Dodd-Frank bill would make a tremendous difference for small community banks and regional banks. We did that. We passed that with 17 votes from the other side. What this did in aggregate was to free up somewhere around \$6 trillion back in the economy. That is real money when you are talking about a \$21 trillion economy. Not all of that has flowed back in yet.

Here is what has happened. There is \$2 trillion on the Russell 1000 balance sheets. These are our largest public companies, and they had the largest balance sheets in their history. They had about \$2 trillion on their balance sheets.

Second, we had about \$2 trillion on bank balance sheets of community banks and regional banks because of Dodd-Frank. Estimates were \$3 trillion

overseas in unrepatriated U.S. profits. What we have done in the last 2 years is fundamentally remove the roadblocks for that capital to flow back into the United States.

What are we seeing? Just the initial blush of regulatory reform pumped up CEO confidence and consumer confidence to 30-year highs. We saw that in the first 6 months of 2017. What happened after that was that consumers started to react, employers started to react, and capital started to flow. The free enterprise system started to breathe again after you took the jackboots of an oversized Federal Government off the throat of free enterprise.

We just heard the Presiding Officer's story about a small business. Those are multiplied by the thousands across our country. This isn't just about big business, as you and I well know. It is about individual enterprise. It is flowing again after a decade of being absent.

I am also proud to tell you that if you look at what the economy is doing right now—honestly, I am just a business guy, but I can back this up with economic realities—these facts are not debatable. This is the greatest economic turnaround in the United States' history. We are growing about a little more than twice the rate as we did in the past decade.

We created 5.3 million new jobs. Median income is the highest in U.S. history. At the same time, unemployment is at the lowest it has been in 50 years in total. African-American, Asian American, and Hispanic-American unemployment is the lowest ever measured. By any measure, this economic turnaround proves that what we believe in actually works. If you get big government out of the way and let the free enterprise system work, capitalism can breathe again, and this is what happens.

Are we going to have a steady rise in a consistent 3.5 percent, 4 percent growth? No, this is free enterprise. This is capitalism. What happens is we form capital. We have an idea for a product or a service, and we develop that. We get a customer. We make a transaction. Cash flows, and we reinvest that. This is what capitalism is. Capitalism is not Big Government getting all of your tax money, turning around, and redistributing that out because that absolutely shuts down free enterprise. As we know, free enterprise is the best economic system we have yet devised on the face of the Earth.

I am embarrassed that the President of the United States—I never thought I would see this day, on the floor of the House of Representatives in a joint session of Congress, in the State of the Union Address—had to feel like he had to make the statement that the United States would never be a socialist country. The fact that it is even debated is so embarrassing to me. It is unbelievable that this could even be proper as a viable alternative, given the history of the last 100 years alone.

If you go back to the 1970s and the great experiment that the Soviet Union was going to bring egalitarianism to the world, well, that failed. We have failed social states today in Venezuela, Cuba, and others. The Soviet Union today in Russia is a mere shadow of its former self because they played the game wrong. It may take decades before that can be rebuilt.

There can be no debate that freedom is what America is about. Our forefathers and foremothers fought and died to make sure that we would always have the liberty of the free enterprise system. That is what we are enjoying right now. That is what we are visibly witnessing before our very eyes today. As we go into a Presidential cycle in 2020, I hope that we have enough sense as a country to see that as the issue that we ought to be debating.

Yes, we have problems. Our debt is a serious threat to our own national security. It is the No. 1 threat to this continued economic boom we are all talking about. We have \$21 trillion of debt. What is worse than that is that over the next 10 years, no matter what we do in terms of discretionary budget, Congress will add another \$10 trillion to the debt unless we do something to save Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. It is as simple as that.

We are actually spending about the same or a little bit less than we were in 2009 in terms of discretionary spending. That is less than one-third of what we spend as a Federal Government. The mandatory side of that equation never gets debated in this body. It is automatic—mandatory. It is an automatic withdrawal, like a house payment, car payment, or insurance payment in a private business.

There is no doubt in my mind that we can solve every one of these. America is not bankrupt. We have more assets than we have liabilities. We have all the wherewithal in the world to solve our long-term debt problem. The rest of the world knows that. That is why they are still buying our corporate bonds and treasuries. I have never been more optimistic about the future of our country for my children and my children's children, but we have to deal with this Federal debt. Growing the economy, as President Trump said 2 years ago, was the first step toward doing that, but we have to get serious about dealing and saving the trust funds for Social Security and Medicare. That doesn't mean cutting them. It means finding a viable financing way to make them viable indefinitely. There are so many ways to do that.

I will close with this. It seems to me that what is at stake here is the very Republic that we are talking about. What are we going to be in the next 100 years? I would submit to you that the evidence is before us right now that one thing we have to be in order to protect the freedom of our country is to remain committed to the free enterprise system that we all have built this

economic boom upon that has been the greatest economic boom since World War II and in the history of humankind.

I implore both sides here to put the political differences aside, and let's get to funding this government on time, which this Congress has only done four times in the last 44 years. Congress has actually shut the government down, including this last one, 21 times.

This is totally unacceptable and unnecessary. I think that with a bipartisan approach, we know there are so many places of agreement that we can begin to do that, and I ask for everybody's forbearance and patience and willingness to engage in a bipartisan way to actually deal with some of these life-threatening issues we see before us.

As we do that, I hope we can end the debate once and for all about what really works here—lower taxes, less regulation, and certainly you have to have controls to make sure we have a level playing field for everybody in the United States, but this onerous, top-down-driven, controlling Big Government policy does not work. We proved that in the last decade and in other decades in the last 100 years.

It is an honor to be in the U.S. Senate. It is an honor to be an American. I never took that for granted, having lived outside of the United States. I can promise the Members of this body that what we have right now is not a false positive. What we have is evidence that capitalism works, the free enterprise system works. If we want to protect our liberty, we have to continue to develop that system.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, like several of my colleagues today, under the leadership of my colleague from Iowa, Senator ERNST, we come to the floor to discuss the benefits of the tax cut of 14 months ago. Congress then passed historic tax legislation that fundamentally reformed our Tax Code and provided tax relief to middle-income Americans and to job creators. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, as it is called, made good on our commitment to provide significant tax relief to middle-income taxpayers while making the Tax Code simpler, fairer, and, of course, pro-growth oriented.

Thanks to a near doubling of the standard deduction, millions of taxpayers are discovering right now, as they file their taxes, they can pay less without spending hours and hours sifting through receipts and extra forms, all because the standard deduction is doubled.

Middle-income taxpayers can also expect to see a significant reduction in their tax bill from last year. For example, an Iowa family of four, with a State's median income of around \$73,000, stands to see their tax bill cut by more than half, or approximately \$2,000. This is real relief that began ap-

pearing in many taxpayers' paychecks at the start of 2018.

Given this, the best way for taxpayers to see how tax reform affects their bottom line is to compare this year's tax return with last year's tax return, rather than on the size of their refund. At the end of the day, the vast majority of taxpayers will see that less of their hard-earned money is coming to Washington for 535 Members of Congress to decide how it will be spent. Of course, those of us making that decision, 535 of us, would have less economic impact than 150 million taxpayers with more money to decide how to spend or save—how to spend it or how to save it. That would enhance our income, creating jobs, much more than Washington disposing of that same amount of money.

It responds to the animal spirits of the free market system—willing buyer and willing seller. This tax release stems from many pro-family and pro-middle-income tax provisions in the law. The law also enacted much needed tax relief for important job creators. It provides a very significant deduction on business income for small businesses, effectively lowering their top tax rate to under 30 percent, in many cases.

This bill corrects an injustice that has existed for decades; that there has never been recognition of the small business person who files an individual tax form compared to a corporate tax form. Small businesses never had equity like they should.

Small businesses, down to the smallest family-owned corner store and family farmer, are benefiting from that provision. Additionally, the law lowered the statutory corporate rate down from the highest in the developed world to 21 percent. The previous corporate tax rate was putting American companies at a very competitive disadvantage globally and consequently costing American jobs.

Just as important, the law put in place immediate expensing for the depreciation of equipment that businesses of all sizes and shapes would invest in. As a result, job creators will have every incentive to invest back into their business and expand operations here at home.

Nearly as soon as the tax cut was signed into law, its positive effects began to be felt throughout the economy. Hundreds of companies began announcing bonuses, pay raises, higher retirement contributions, new hiring, and increased investment. This included numerous businesses in Iowa. Utility companies across the country also responded by passing along their tax savings to their customers in the form of lower electric gas and water bills. Higher take-home pay, bonuses for employers, and reduced utility bills were all important benefits of the tax cut.

While the tax cuts and reforms have only been in effect for a little over a year, the economic signs point toward

it having its intended effects. In 2018, the economy grew at 3.1 percent—the highest growth rate since 2005. Wages have risen at the fastest pace in nearly a decade. Nearly 3 million jobs have been created since the passage of tax reform, including more than 15,000 new jobs in Iowa alone. Unemployment rates for Hispanic and African-American workers have hit alltime lows.

For the first time on record, the number of job openings has exceeded job seekers for 9 straight months. Small business optimism is at near-record highs, and growth in business investment has been more than twice the rate it was during the sluggish Obama economy.

All of this good economic news points toward continued economic growth moving forward. This is key to sustainable, long-term wage growth, which is the most powerful anti-poverty measure that exists. Thanks to the tax cuts and the reform, America is open for business, and the economy is booming—all to the benefit of individuals and families in Iowa and every State.

Of course, all of this good economic news is no reason for us to become complacent. Over the next 2 years, I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to build on the success of tax reform. I say that willingness to work with my colleagues both from the standpoint of being an individual Senator from the State of Iowa as well as being chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The majority whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in last night's State of the Union Address, the President highlighted the strength of the economy. After years of stagnation under the Obama administration, our economy has come roaring back, thanks in substantial part to Republican economic policies.

After the Presidential election 2 years ago, Republicans made it our mission to get our economy going again. We cut excessive regulations, and we passed a historic comprehensive reform of our outdated Tax Code.

The Tax Code plays a huge role in the health of our economy. It helps determine how much money individuals and families have to spend and save. It helps to determine whether a small business can expand and hire. It helps determine whether larger businesses hire, invest, and stay in the United States.

A small business owner facing a huge tax bill is highly unlikely to be able to expand their business or to hire a new employee. A larger business is going to find it hard to create jobs or improve benefits for employees if it is struggling to stay competitive against foreign businesses paying much less in taxes. A larger business is unlikely to keep jobs and investment in the United States if the Tax Code makes it vastly more expensive to hire American workers.

Before we passed tax reform a year ago in December, our Tax Code was not helping our economy. It was taking too much money from American families, and it was making it harder for businesses, large and small, to create jobs, increase wages, and grow. That is why, after months of work, we passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

This legislation cut tax rates for American families, doubled the child tax credit, and nearly doubled the standard deduction. It lowered tax rates across the board for owners of small- and medium-sized businesses, farms, and ranches. It lowered our Nation's massive corporate tax rate, which up until January 1 of last year was the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. It expanded business owners' ability to recover the cost of investments they make in their businesses, which frees up cash they can reinvest in their operations and in their workers. It brought the U.S. international tax system into the 21st century so American businesses are not operating at a competitive disadvantage next to their foreign counterparts.

Our goal with this bill was simple. We wanted to make life better for the American people; we wanted to let Americans keep more of their hard-earned money; and we wanted to spur economic growth to give workers access to good jobs, better wages, and more opportunities.

I am proud to report that our policies are working. The economy grew at a robust 3.4 percent in the third quarter of 2018. January marked the 11th straight month that unemployment has been at or below 4 percent. That is the longest streak in nearly five decades.

In 2018, for the first time ever, the number of job openings outnumbered the number of job seekers, and 2018 saw the most impressive job growth in the manufacturing industry since 1997. Wage growth has accelerated. Wages have now been growing at a rate of 3 percent or greater for 6 straight months. The last time wage growth reached this level was in 2009—a decade ago. Median household income is at an all-time inflation-adjusted record of \$61,372, and on and on.

Continuing with something that is working is usually a good strategy. If your economic policies are working, continuing them is a pretty logical thing to do.

Democrats apparently have a different opinion. Instead of continuing the policies that are producing economic growth and opportunities for American workers, they want to end them. Instead of reducing taxes, they want to raise taxes. Instead of getting government out of your way, they want to put government in charge of your healthcare, your electricity options, and more.

I wish I were joking, but Democrats are increasingly uniting around policies that would not only undo the progress our economy has made but

would damage our economy for the long term.

One of the most dangerous proposals is the so-called Medicare for All proposal, which would abolish our current system of employer-sponsored private insurance and replace it with government-run healthcare—paid for on the backs of the middle class. The cost for this program would be staggering, an estimated \$32 trillion over the next decade. That is equivalent to the entire Federal discretionary budget more than two times over.

Doubling the amount of individual and corporate income taxes collected would still not be enough to pay for the mammoth costs of this plan. Doubling all the revenue collected from income taxes in this country on the individual and business side would not be enough to pay for the mammoth costs of this plan.

Passing any version of Medicare for All would lead to stratospheric tax hikes for Americans in addition to the loss of their employer-sponsored insurance.

Then, of course, there is the so-called Green New Deal, which could raise Americans' energy costs by more than \$3,000 a year. I don't know what families Democrats are talking to, but I have a hard time thinking of working families who can afford to spend \$3,000 more each year on their energy bills.

Then there are the plain old tax hikes—like a proposal to raise the top marginal tax rate to 70 percent, a rate we haven't seen since 1965. It would be a tax hike not only on individuals but on small- and medium-sized businesses as well.

Take the House Democrats' proposal to substantially increase the corporate tax rate. They want to raise the corporate tax rate 40 percent on businesses from what it is today. Before the passage of tax reform, America's global companies faced the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. That put American businesses at a serious disadvantage on the global stage, which, in turn, put American workers at a disadvantage.

Since we lowered the corporate rate, we have seen economic growth, money returning to the United States, and new benefits and opportunities for American workers.

It is difficult to understand what would possess Democrats to jeopardize economic growth and opportunities for American workers by hiking the corporate rate again. Right after we lowered it to get more competitive internationally, they are talking about raising it 40 percent.

I said before, I wish I were joking about some of the Democrats' outrageous proposals. In addition to the money Democrats would be taking directly out of Americans' pockets to pay for their programs, it would also be permanently damaging to economic growth. If Democrats succeed in passing proposals like Medicare for All, Americans will be facing a future not

just of higher taxes but of lower wages, fewer jobs, and diminished opportunities.

Republicans are going to do everything we can to ensure that doesn't happen. We will continue pushing for policies that will create jobs and increase wages, build on the progress we have made in the last couple of years. We will continue pushing for policies that expand opportunities for workers, that increase access to good jobs and to fulfilling careers, and we will continue pushing for policies that lower the cost of living, including the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs. We will continue pushing for policies that help hard-working families keep more of their income and save for education and retirement. We are committed to giving every American access to a future of freedom, opportunity, and security.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, thank you for the recognition.

I rise to express my strong support for the bipartisan public lands package. This legislation, which puts together over 100 public lands, natural resources, and water bills, protects and expands our Nation's lands and strengthens our local economies.

This sweeping package shows the country the tremendous amount that can be accomplished when both parties in Congress roll up their sleeves and work together toward a common goal.

While there are certainly other measures I wish we had included in this package, overall, this bill can pass both Chambers on strong bipartisan votes. I am looking forward to this Congress showing its strong support for keeping public lands in public hands and protecting them for future generations.

I am particularly proud of provisions in this package that I have championed for years to benefit my home State of New Mexico, starting with permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is our Nation's most successful conservation program and is extremely popular with the American people. Yet Congress has consistently underfunded it and failed to make it permanent. I have been fighting for years for full funding and permanent reauthorization. The public lands package does just that. This was a law championed by my father in 1965 while he was Secretary of the Interior. I have been proud to carry the torch and work to make the Land and Water Conservation Fund permanent. In New Mexico

alone, over 1,200 local projects have been supported by the LWCF since it began in 1965.

Over the last 2 years, the President has proposed essentially eliminating the LWCF, but in a major step forward, the Senate package permanently reauthorizes the program and provides annual funding with at least \$900 million—all from offshore oil and gas leases and other revenue streams that don't come from taxpayer dollars. Giving the Land and Water Conservation Fund permanent authorization is a monumental win for our entire Nation. I hope that soon we can secure robust mandatory funding as well. Until then, I will continue to fight, along with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, to ensure that this program receives significant funding each year in the appropriations process.

The lands package includes my Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Conservation Act, cosponsored by Senator HEINRICH. Senator HEINRICH and I have been fighting to protect this rugged, beautiful part of southern New Mexico for years. In 2014, President Obama used our legislation as the basis for his Executive order to create the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.

The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks area has contained protected wilderness study areas since the 1980s and 1990s. It is high time to make these study areas permanent wilderness. Senator HEINRICH and I have worked closely with all stakeholders—ranchers, conservationists, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and many others—to bring these lands into 10 permanent wilderness areas. Our bill, S. 441, places approximately 240,000 acres into wilderness while it releases approximately 30,000 acres so that the Border Patrol has the flexibility that is necessary to keep the border secure. The Border Patrol concerns have been addressed, as have the interests of grazing leaseholders, who will be able to continue to graze their cattle.

The areas targeted for protection showcase sky island mountains, native Chihuahuan Desert grasslands, caves, unique lava flows, limestone cliffs, and winding canyons. As you just heard, the landscapes for designation are tremendously varied. Here is a photo of one that depicts the Organ Mountains. What a magnificent range.

Under the 1964 Wilderness Act, “wilderness” is “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” The 10 areas for designation in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks should remain untrammelled, and they deserve the special protection that “wilderness” designation confers.

Like the wilderness study areas in our newest national monument to the south, Senator HEINRICH and I have been working for years to designate two wilderness study areas in our newest national monument to the north as

“wilderness.” The 13,000-acre Cerro del Yuta and the 8,000-acre Rio San Antonio study areas within the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument are equally deserving of “wilderness” status. The centerpiece of Cerro del Yuta is Ute Mountain, which is a 10,000-foot-high volcanic dome that overlooks the magnificent Taos Gorge, which is shown here. It is pretty inspiring when you stand on top and look into this gorge. The Rio San Antonio sits 200 feet below a plateau and creates a unique riparian area and amazing recreational opportunities that boost the local economy.

This designation is also the product of a grassroots coalition of local stakeholders, including sportsmen, small business owners, pueblos, and conservationists, who have worked for years to preserve the Rio Grande del Norte area for future generations. By designating the Cerro del Yuta and the Rio San Antonio areas under our Cerros del Norte Conservation Act, it cements their place as part of northern New Mexico's protected heritage.

During the last congressional session, I and my good friend, the late Senator John McCain, worked hard on the 21st Century Conservation Corps Service Act, or 21 CSC for short. We wanted to make sure that our youth and our veterans had real and meaningful opportunities to serve our country by conserving our great outdoors. This bill reinvigorates public-private partnerships between the Federal Government and the private sector and enables our youth and veterans to engage in national service on conservation-related projects. The program also targets Native American youth by establishing an Indian Youth Service Corps to work on Indian Country priorities.

The bill also expands eligibility so that returning veterans and others can participate in these important programs. It expands the number of Agencies that can establish service corps, and it authorizes detailed data collection so that we can track exactly how these programs help communities and our public lands.

This kind of program makes so much sense, for we have a huge backlog of infrastructure needs on our public lands—a backlog that is only growing with increased wildfires and natural disasters. Younger workers, especially Native youth, face higher unemployment rates, and our veterans face their own set of challenges when they transition to civilian life. Service corps are a cost-effective way to promote conservation goals and to fill employment gaps.

This program has broad bipartisan support—support from the Western Governors' Association, veterans organizations, and the outdoor industry—and it would pay special tribute to our late colleague, Senator McCain, whom we all admire so much. I urge its passage.

One of New Mexico's most successful watershed management collaborations

is the Rio Puerco Management Committee that was established in 1996. The Rio Puerco is the largest tributary to the Middle Rio Grande Basin. The watershed encompasses approximately 4.7 million acres and unfortunately is the primary source of undesirable fine sediment that is delivered to the Rio Grande system. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, on average, the Rio Puerco delivers 78 percent of the total suspended sediment load of the Rio Grande, although it provides only 4 percent of the runoff.

The Rio Puerco Watershed Management Program is a community-based approach that brings Federal and State agencies, Tribes, nonprofits, and local citizens together to work on watershed management, including sediment reduction and habitat and vegetation restoration. The committee has been widely recognized for its success and has earned awards from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Bureau of Land Management. Its most recent 10-year reauthorization ends on March 30 of this year. We need to permanently authorize this very effective program.

Senator MURKOWSKI and Senator CANTWELL, I applaud your work on expeditiously bringing this package to the floor. The 100 bills that compose the public lands package boast 50 different Senate sponsors and nearly 90 cosponsors. The package represents the hard work of countless individuals and organizations throughout the country—all committed to preserving and protecting our country's greatest treasures. I stand resolutely behind that commitment as well, and I urge the unanimous passage of this historic package.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I start by thanking Senator TOM UDALL, our senior Senator from New Mexico, for the incredible amount of work and really the years of advocacy and attention that have gone into many of the portions of this land package that he just described. Without his leadership, without his partnership, we would not be celebrating this opportunity today.

I rise to celebrate the landmark conservation measures that we are about to vote on here in the Senate. As a Senator from a State that proudly calls itself the Land of Enchantment, I know how much our public lands mean to New Mexicans. These are the places to which generations of families have gone to explore our natural wonders and to learn about our rich history and our incredible culture. Hunting and fishing, as well as hiking and camping, on our public lands are quite simply part of our identity in the State of New Mexico, and this relationship with our land and our water is fundamental to who we are.

These activities also fuel a thriving outdoor recreation economy that supports nearly 100,000 jobs in New Mexico

alone. Nationwide, outdoor recreation generates nearly \$900 billion of consumer spending each year and directly supports more than 7 million American jobs. Think about that—7 million American jobs. That is why I thought to pass this legislation that will open additional access and create recreation opportunities on our public lands to support this important part of our economy.

I commend our chairman, Senator LISA MURKOWSKI of Alaska, our ranking member, JOE MANCHIN of West Virginia, and our former ranking member, Senator MARIA CANTWELL of Washington. We are, to say the least, going through a frustrating political era here in Washington, and there just don't seem to be many things we can agree on these days. Yet the package of public lands and conservation bills that we are now considering on the floor reflect Chairman MURKOWSKI, Ranking Member MANCHIN, and Senator CANTWELL's leadership. It demonstrates their willingness to put aside partisan rancor and do the hard work that is required to build bipartisan consensus.

I am proud that we are moving forward to pass these bills that have earned broad, bipartisan support in our committee to conserve our public lands, to create new outdoor recreation opportunities, and to build on the success of our Nation's most effective conservation programs. I want to quickly highlight some of these incredible victories in this bill for New Mexico.

First and foremost, I am so proud that we are passing two bills to advance community-driven conservation visions for New Mexico's two newest national monuments—the Rio Grande del Norte and the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. From the tops of the Cerro de la Olla and Ute Mountain to the depths of the Rio Grande Gorge, the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument in northern New Mexico is one of the most spectacular landscapes on Earth. The historic monument designation for the Rio Grande del Norte was the direct result of tireless efforts by those in the local community who were dedicated to protecting this area for future generations, and they worked for decades to do just that.

The legislation we are voting on establishes two new wilderness areas within this monument—the Cerro del Yuta Wilderness and the Rio San Antonio Wilderness. By designating the most rugged and unique habitat in the Rio Grande del Norte as wilderness, we can protect the monument's natural heritage for our children and for generations to come.

We are doing the same thing for southern New Mexico's Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks is incredibly rich in cultural and natural history. It includes six stunning mountain ranges. This is the very well-known Organ Mountains—its profile known by everyone who has ever visited or lived in southern New Mexico.

It also includes the Robledos, the East Potrillos, the West Potrillos, the Dona Anas, and the Sierra de las Uvas.

The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Conservation Act that Senator UDALL sponsored, that I have cosponsored, and that we have worked together on for all of these years will safeguard sensitive cultural, historical, and natural treasures in this monument. "Wilderness" designation for several of the most rugged and unique areas in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks will promote the monument as a world-class destination.

President Obama based his 2014 "national monument" designation on the legislation introduced by Senator UDALL and me, but, as with the Rio Grande del Norte, only Congress has authority to create additional federally protected wilderness.

We can now ensure permanent protection for the wildest places within the national monument, including the Organ Mountains but also the Potrillo, Uvas, and Robledo Mountains, as well as Aden Lava Flow and Broad Canyon.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to the diverse coalition of stakeholders from throughout our State who worked for decades to make the Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks monuments a reality. From Tribal leaders to local elected officials, sportsmen, ranchers, land grant heirs, acequia parciantes, small businesses, and conservation groups, so many New Mexicans came together and worked together to make this possible.

Once again, I especially want to thank my colleague, the senior Senator from New Mexico, TOM UDALL, and our former Senator Jeff Bingaman for their leadership and their partnership in getting this over the finish line.

These two monuments protect places that New Mexicans have long recognized as national treasures in their backyards.

Once we pass this legislation, we will put a capstone on years of work to make these monuments national models of community-driven, landscape-scale public lands conservation. I have no doubt that future generations will be grateful for what we are voting on here.

Speaking of future generations, I am also pleased that this public lands package includes my bipartisan bill, the Every Kid Outdoors Act. I want to thank Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER of Tennessee for joining me as the lead Republican sponsor of this bill. The Every Kid Outdoors Act will allow every fourth grader in America to visit our Nation's national parks or national forests or national wildlife refuges free of charge and to bring their families along with them.

Many of you might not know that long before I became a Senator, one of my first jobs in New Mexico was as the executive director of Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions—a 90-plus-year-old experiential education organization

that takes children and adults out into the backcountry of our public lands.

Connecting kids to the outdoors can inspire a lifelong connection to conservation, while reaping all of the health benefits that go along with an active lifestyle. Some of my favorite memories are from my adventures on public lands with my wife Julie and with our sons, Carter and Micah, and I want all kids to have those same opportunities to fall in love with our amazing public lands.

Since 2015, the Department of the Interior has offered fourth graders and their families free entrance to all federally managed public lands. I can't tell you how popular this program has become. The Every Kid Outdoors Act codifies this effort into law and will encourage the creation of more educational opportunities for all of our kids on their public lands.

I am so excited that we are encouraging a new generation of kids—a generation that will explore the rich natural and cultural history on display in our parks, forests, and monuments. After all, they are the future stewards of these special places that we all love.

I also want to celebrate that we are voting to permanently reauthorize what I believe has been one of America's most successful conservation programs ever, the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

In New Mexico, LWCF, as it is known—the Land and Water Conservation Fund—has protected iconic landscapes, such as the Valles Caldera, Ute Mountain, and Valle de Oro, without costing taxpayers a single dime. It has also provided for community projects, such as baseball and soccer fields, playgrounds, and picnic areas.

The broad support that LWCF has had from both Republicans and Democrats over the last half century is a testament to how well the program has worked all across this Nation; however, despite our best efforts to save LWCF, congressional inaction allowed the program to expire last year. I am proud to say that once we pass this package, we will no longer need to worry year after year about renewing this incredibly successful program. Now LWCF funds can continue being put to work protecting drinking water, providing public land access, and funding our neighborhood parks.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude once more to Chairman MURKOWSKI for working with me to advance provisions in this package to improve public access on our public lands. Many pieces of the Sportsmen's Act are included in this, and I am especially pleased that we are passing my legislation, the HUNT Act, which will improve access to public lands wherever hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation are permitted.

With that, I would like to encourage all of my colleagues to support this bipartisan package of bills. I am confident that they will grow our outdoor recreation economy, promote access to

our public lands, and support the sustainable use of our natural resources. What we will vote on will go a long way toward ensuring that the outdoor places that we all treasure will be protected for future generations of Americans to enjoy.

I yield the remainder of my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, we are at a point we have been hoping to get to for some time, which is debate on S. 47, the Natural Resources Management Act.

This is a compilation, if you will, of various lands bills, water bills, and sportsmen's bills. This is a lands package that Senator CANTWELL, Senator MANCHIN, and I recently introduced, but it is the result of years—multiple years, actually—of regular order process in the committees of jurisdiction—most notably, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. It is the result of months of intense, bicameral back-and-forth negotiations with now-Chairman RAÚL GRIJALVA and now-Ranking Member ROB BISHOP of the House Natural Resources Committee. In that back-and-forth, we said: We are going to be very specific to our jurisdiction here, and we are going to stick to a four-corners agreement that we reached late last year and had actually confirmed here on the Senate floor in late December.

This package contains more than 100 public lands, natural resources, and water measures that have good, strong support in both Chambers. We are at that point where we can not only do the back-and-forth, but we can work through the back-and-forth that comes when we are able to advance a package like this to the floor.

I would like to thank Majority Leader MCCONNELL and Minority Leader SCHUMER for agreeing to add our lands package directly to the Senate calendar. This was an agreement that was made back in December. We were teed up and ready to go, but in fairness, you run out of time at the end of the year. There was an agreement that was reached here on the Senate floor between the two leaders and other colleagues to make sure that we would take up this package quickly and that we would work to address it early in this new Congress.

A lot of thanks go out to our leadership, and special thanks to my former ranking member, Senator CANTWELL, for working with me to get us to this point and to my new ranking member, Senator MANCHIN, for really stepping up and helping to manage this package just weeks into his new role as the ranking member.

Before I get into my full remarks, I also want to recognize the efforts of several of the other members of the Energy Committee who have really gone the extra mile to help us get to this point. On our side of the aisle, Senator GARDNER and Senator DAINES have been just dogged in making sure that—as issues arose and as we tried to cobble together different proposals, they were in the thick of it and have been helpful every step of the way. On the other side of the aisle, Senator HEINRICH and Senator WYDEN have been equally aggressive and helpful in all they have done to help advance and build support for this package.

It is probably true, if you were to look through this package, you are not going to see something that stands out with bright lights and flags that says these are sweeping changes in Federal policy. Most of the items we have included are probably considered too parochial, too local, too discrete to merit floor time on a standalone basis. That is the problem with lands packages, generally, in that they don't take up a lot of space when it comes to a Senate calendar, but I can tell you that every one of the provisions in this package matters to a community, matters to a constituency—many of them in Western States, States like mine, that have a great amount of public land, of Federal lands. These are, again, important at a host of different levels. So working with colleagues to understand their local priorities, their constituency, has really been a real pleasure as part of this process.

We worked very hard within the Energy and Natural Resources Committee this last Congress to prepare the vast majority of bills in the package, and our colleagues on the House side did the same. What we were able to agree to is a package that is sponsored by 50 different Senators in this past Congress. When you count the cosponsor provisions, this package addresses the priorities of close to 90 Senators. You have just about everybody in this body, Republicans and Democrats, who have come together and said: This is an issue in my region, in my State. These are issues we need to be working on together.

I think it is a real reflection of the priorities—the wide range of priorities—that Members have for their home States. I think it is also a sign, when you have more than 100 of these smaller, more discrete bills packages together—it is a sign that we are really overdue in moving these lands bills.

The last time we had a significant lands package on the floor was 2014. It has been 5 years since we have had an opportunity to move, again, a significant number of Members' priorities. I think it is also a testament to the long hours we have spent and our staffs have spent reviewing and working through and really trying to build the agreements on what we hope is soon to be ready to be signed into law.

It is important this bill, this package, becomes law in the near future.

What we do through this legislative package is we really provide new opportunities for economic development through land conveyances and exchanges. We expand and we enhance access for sports men and women on our Federal lands for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation activities.

This should be noted. We have been trying to work a sportsmen's package—a compilation of bills that relate to access on our Federal lands for hunting, fishing, and shooting sports. We have been trying to do this for three Congresses running. It is long overdue.

We also feature provisions related to western water management, national park units, other Federal lands administered by the BLM and the Forest Service. One of the provisions that is probably most strongly supported in this package reauthorizes the deposit function of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This expired last September. Instead of leaving that program subject to repeated lapses and short-term extensions—we see a lot of that around here—what we have done is we have agreed to remove that expiration date. We effectively make that permanent, and we paired it—this is very important to us. We paired that permanent authorization with meaningful reforms, with meaningful reforms that will help ensure greater balance in the funds that are allocated to the program.

I mentioned that many of these provisions might seem very local, very parochial. We have a provision that will facilitate the expansion of an airport in Custer County, SD. I have never been to Custer County, but when you have a constriction, a limitation on your ability to expand an airport because you need a land conveyance, it literally takes an act of Congress in order to make that happen.

Another provision in the measure will enable the construction of a large-scale solar project in the State of Arizona. This is going to bring about jobs, and it is going to bring about renewable energy opportunities. We have several more provisions that will designate national monuments but done the right way. The right way is with Congress in the lead, rather than the President exercising his authorities under the Antiquities Act—so making sure you have that level of consensus that is so important when designations like this move forward.

On some of the more Alaska-specific provisions, we have upheld our promise, a promise made decades ago to Alaska Natives who served during the Vietnam war. During this time of their service, they basically missed out on their opportunity to receive the land allotments that had been promised to them by the Federal Government under the land rights. What we have done is we have worked to address that inequity in a way that is fair to our veterans and fair to the process.

We provide routing flexibility for the natural gas pipeline that has been proposed for some time. We are able to create new opportunities for small, small, small communities, like down in Kake in Southeast Alaska or Utkiagvik up in the North Slope.

We also reached agreement to improve our volcano warning and monitoring system. Some of you might not think about why we need to be paying attention to our volcanoes. Believe me, you don't want to be in an aircraft when you are flying through volcanic ash. Knowing what is going on is important. Whether you are in Hawaii, Alaska, or another State, it is really just a matter of time before we see more eruptions. We saw it in Alaska with Mount Cleveland last year and Kilauea in Hawaii. So we are paying attention to that.

These are just a few of the highlights. I am going to be talking to more of them on the floor as debate goes on, but I also want to close with kind of an explanation of where we are in the process right now.

As I mentioned, when you have a package that has 100-plus bills—and we haven't done something like this in now 5 years—there is no shortage of provisions that we could include. We really worked hard. We did our best to work through everything we had on the table and included as much as we could reach agreement on. I think we all can agree there is more we can do, and we should try to do, and that our work on our lands and our resource issues is not going to end just because we passed this bill.

That is why I would encourage folks to view this as a first step. It is literally a downpayment. We say we are clearing the decks of the provisions that have been outstanding for a long time right now and that are ready to go right now.

I know we have several Members who would like to have amendments. We want to try to find a way to accommodate some of those, but that is going to take a level of cooperation. It always does. We may be able to take some by unanimous consent or by rollcall vote, but there are also going to be some we are just not going to be able to accept at this time and on this package.

Again, I would take back to the bipartisan agreement that we had and the spirit of that agreement, that we want to stay away from things that are outside our jurisdiction or that would create problems with the House. The House has been good—a cooperative arrangement up to this point in time. I think it is fair to say we have had some very good signals that they are anxious to receive this from the Senate and thus help us facilitate its passage into law.

For those who aren't able to add their specific provisions, you certainly have my commitment to work with you in this Congress, but in the meantime I think what you have in front of you is an excellent package. It is time

for us to pass it. It is time to show our strong support, send it to the House of Representatives, and then to the President's desk.

I am pleased to yield and recognize my friend and new colleague on the Energy Committee—not a new colleague but certainly my new ranking member—who has been a great person to work with and a real help in all of our efforts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, first, I am so pleased to work with my good friend Chairman MURKOWSKI on something she has worked on for quite some time with Senator CANTWELL. Taking up this new position, I want to make sure I help them the best I can to bring this to fruition. That is what we are working on right now. To have S. 47 in front of us is pretty special.

The public lands package includes such a wide variety of bills, as the chairman has spoken about. There are currently more than 130 different pieces of individual legislation that will address many Members' priorities for public lands and natural resources in their respective States. A public lands package doesn't come together that often. I think it has been 5 years, as was said, and they are far and few between. When it does, we try to accommodate and do the right thing that really helps our country and future generations.

Many of the bills in this package provide technical corrections and improvements to existing policies but do not have a significant impact outside their local sphere. However, these minor bills will improve the way our public lands are managed and conserved at the ground level. While these bills are important to the residents of the small towns like mine across America and Members of this body who represent them, rarely will these individual bills receive the floor time they truly deserve. Because of this, it is necessary for us to move these bills together in this package, which is what we have coming up before us probably by tomorrow.

This package was literally years in the making. As I said, it builds on the package that was negotiated last December by Chairman MURKOWSKI, then-Ranking Member CANTWELL, then-Chairman BISHOP, and then-Ranking Member GRIJALVA of the House Natural Resources Committee. Together, this group came together and negotiated a large package. Unfortunately, the Senate could not pass the package last December, which is why we find ourselves here today.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as the ranking member of the committee and to be working with my friend from Alaska Chairman MURKOWSKI on this package but also on many other issues we will consider in the committee in the coming time.

I would also like to take this moment to thank the committee staff, the

majority and minority, as well as the floor staff for their diligence in working on this package. I would like to include a list of names who worked on the package for both me and Senator CANTWELL and in our committee over the last few months. I would also like to include the names of the floor and leadership staff.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that this list of names be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 47 Lands Package Staff Team: Mary Louise Wagner, Democratic Staff Director; Sam Fowler, Democratic Chief Counsel; David Brooks, Democratic General Counsel; Bryan Petit, Democratic Senior Professional Staff Member; Rebecca Bonner, Democratic Professional Staff Member; Camille Touton, Democratic Professional Staff Member; Sarah Venuto, Democratic Staff Director; Lance West, Democratic Deputy Staff Director; Elliot Howard, Democratic Professional Staff Member; Lauren Vernon, Democratic Research Assistant; Tom Schaff, National Park Service Bevinetto Fellow; David Poyer, Democratic Staff Assistant; Kennedy Woodard, Democratic Staff Assistant; Cameron Nelson, Democratic Research Assistant; Sean Byrne, Legislative Assistant; Gary Myrick, Secretary for the Minority; Tricia Engle, Assistant Secretary for the Minority; Ryan McConaghy, Floor Assistant to the Democratic Leader; Daniel Tinsley, Floor Assistant to the Democratic Leader; Brad Watt, Floor Assistant to the Democratic Leader; Stephanie Paone, Democratic Cloakroom Assistant; Maalik Simmons, Democratic Cloakroom Assistant; Nathan Oursler, Democratic Cloakroom Assistant; Mary Frances Repko, Minority Staff Director; Andrew Rogers, Minority Chief Counsel; Christophe Tulou, Minority Senior Counsel and Policy Director; Elizabeth Mabry, Minority Professional Staff Member; and John Kane, Minority Senior Professional Staff Member.

Mr. MANCHIN. This package enjoys the support from numerous national stakeholder organizations across the political spectrum. For example, the National Wildlife Federation and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation are two of its strongest and most dedicated advocates. I thank them for their support. I ask unanimous consent that the list of organizations writing in support of this bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The organizations include: Bi-partisan Policy Center Action; League of Conservation Voters; Boone and Crockett Club; Ventura County; Chugach of Alaska Corporation; The Wilderness Society; conservation groups including National Audubon Society and the Sierra Club; livestock groups such as the Public Lands Council, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, and American Sheep Industry Association; outdoor recreation groups including Access Fund, American Alpine Club, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, Colorado Mountain Club, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Outdoor Alliance, Outdoor Industry Association, Surfrider Foundation, The Conservation Alliance, The Mazamas, The Mountaineers, Winter Midlands Alliance; organizations representing the Outdoor Recreation

Roundtable including American Horse Council, American Sportfishing, Association Archery Trade Association, Association of Marina Industries, Boat Owners Association of the United States, The Corps Network, International Snowmobile Manufacturers, Association Marine Retailers, Association of the Americas Motorcycle Industry Council, National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds, National Marine Manufacturers Association, National Park Hospitality, Association National Shooting Sports Foundation, PeopleForBikes, Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association, RV Dealers Association RV Industry, Association Specialty Equipment Market, Association Specialty Vehicle Institute of America; sportsmen's groups including American Fly Fishing Trade Association, American Sportfishing Association, American Woodcock Society, Angler Action Foundation, Archery Trade Association, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.), Bear Trust International, Bonefish & Tarpon Trust, Boone & Crockett Club, California Waterfowl Association, Camp Fire Club of America, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Conservation Force, Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports, Delta Waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited, Fly Fishers International, Houston Safari Club, Izaak Walton League of America, Land Trust Alliance, National Deer Alliance, National Marine Manufacturers Association, National Shooting Sports Foundation, National Wildlife Federation, North American Falconers Association, Orion: The Hunter's Institute, Outdoor Industry Association, Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever, Pope & Young Club, Public Lands Foundation, Quality Deer Management Association, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ruffed Grouse Society, Sportsmen's Alliance, Texas Wildlife Association, The Nature Conservancy, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Trust for Public Land, Whitetails Unlimited, Wildlife Forever, Wildlife Management Institute; and The Corps Group Network with many national and regional organizations including Appalachian Trail Conservancy Leadership Corps, Citizens Conservation Corps, Harpers Ferry Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center, and Stewards Individual Placement Program.

Mr. MANCHIN. This package should be warmly received by both Democrats and Republicans. It is truly a bipartisan effort. For starters, the package includes numerous land exchanges and conveyances, designates over 1.3 million acres of wilderness, designates 367 miles of wild and scenic rivers, and provides boundary adjustments, designation changes, and management improvements to numerous areas in all four corners of the country. All of this will improve access, provide recreational opportunities, and allow four of our Federal public land management Agencies—the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service—to better serve the public through their varying missions as directed by Congress.

Our public lands are truly one of the Nation's greatest treasures, and we are unique in how we set aside some of our most special places in the country to be conserved, protected, and easily accessible to the public so we can all enjoy the beauty these areas offer. Usually, these lands are located in

rural areas, with few other economic opportunities, making these treasures economic engines for the surrounding communities. In fact, data from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis shows the outdoor recreation economy accounted for 2.2 percent of GDP and grew faster than the overall economy.

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation supports 7.6 million direct national jobs and \$887 billion in consumer spending. Overall, this contributes billions to the Federal, State, and local governments in tax revenue.

In West Virginia, outdoor recreation supports 91,000 direct jobs and \$9 billion in consumer spending. Each year, 67 percent of West Virginia residents take to the outdoors to escape the hustle and bustle of their daily lives to enjoy the peace and certainty of our wild and wonderful outdoor heritage. It is truly almost heaven. If you haven't been there, we welcome you.

This package provides permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which Senator MURKOWSKI has pointed out. This is something most every one of us—535 Members of Congress—is truly supportive of because it affects our States and our districts. LWCF is a simple yet highly effective conservation tool with unrivaled success over the last 50 years. Every year, \$900 million in royalties paid by energy companies drilling for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf are put into this fund.

Unfortunately, LWCF expired last September. The National Resource Management Act provides permanent reauthorization of the LWCF. That is enough to bring all of us together.

This permanent reauthorization ensures that States and Federal public land management Agencies have the ability to continue to protect and conserve our natural resources for the next generation, and it does so without relying on taxpayer dollars.

Since 1965, more than \$243 million in LWCF funds have been spent in my little State of West Virginia on more than 500 projects, both on State and Federal lands. This includes improvements to local parks and public spaces and 54 of our little State's 55 counties. It also funded acquisition for our most cherished public lands, such as the Gauley River National Recreation Area, the New River Gorge National River, and Dolly Sods in the Monongahela National Forest.

This package also includes some long-awaited priorities for our sportsmen's groups. Each year, more than 350,000 hunters take to the woods in West Virginia to pursue game. These hunting traditions directly benefit rural communities, generating annual revenue and supporting 5,000 jobs. According to the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, hunting-related expenditures total nearly \$270 million of the State's economy. Aside from this, and perhaps most importantly,

hunting in West Virginia is one of our oldest pastimes in which friends and families can gather and spend quality time together.

As I work with other Members of this very body on difficult issues where we may strongly disagree with each other, we are able to set aside differences when it comes to sportsmen's traditions. The conversations quickly turn to stories of hunting a deer with our children and grandchildren or taking a child to the first deer camp. It is important that we provide opportunities to keep these traditions alive.

The Natural Resource Management Act will expand and enhance sportsmen's access by making Federal lands throughout West Virginia and the Nation "open unless closed" for fishing, hunting, recreational shooting, and other outdoor activities.

As a hunter myself and as vice chair of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, I know how frustrated sportsmen's groups have been in trying to get their bills passed the last few years. That is one of the reasons I am pleased that Chairman MURKOWSKI's bill, of which I am an original cosponsor, the Sportsmen's Act, is included in this package.

The Natural Resource Management Act also establishes several national heritage areas, including one in West Virginia, the Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area. National heritage areas are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area has been operating as an ad hoc national heritage area for more than a decade. Despite not having official designation, the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area has continually done a great deal for West Virginia. For example, the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area administers a credible AmeriCorps program. In one recent program year, 38 AmeriCorps members completed more than 65,000 service hours directly benefiting local rural areas in West Virginia, as in every State. These 38 members improved 1,700 acres of public land and managed more than 1,000 total volunteers.

By providing the official NHA designation, the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area can earn the national recognition it deserves and is now also eligible for grants and technical assistance from the National Park Service. This will take their programmatic efforts and other services they provide to the region to the next level.

I believe that this package is a great bill for both my Republican and Democratic friends. Numerous pieces of legislation that have been longstanding priorities for many Members are included.

I would like to thank Chairman MURKOWSKI again, as well as other members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, for their efforts to reach an agreement on this bill. For those of

our colleagues who felt that they were not able to get exactly what they wanted or exactly what they would love to have had in this bill, we are committed to working with them to further help them in getting access to any other piece of legislation we will have working through the committee.

I want to thank the majority leader for his willingness to bring this bill to the floor. I believe it is time to send the bill to the House and to the President for his signature. We have had a great working relationship with Chairman GRIJALVA, and he is committed to working with us as we work through this process.

There are many pieces of good legislation in this package that will be valued for years to come by communities across the country and each one of our States. I strongly encourage Members to vote yes on this final package.

Thank you.

I yield the floor to the Senator from Montana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Today is a special day. Today is a culmination of years of work. I mean that. We were literally on the floor 7 or 8 years ago with a bill similar to this one that did not get across the finish line. We were here 2 years after that and 2 years after that, and now we are here today.

Before she leaves the floor, I want to thank Senator MURKOWSKI for her leadership. Senator CANTWELL is not here, but I want to thank her for the work she has done on this bill because it was big. I want to thank Senator MANCHIN for continuing the legacy of these two, and, hopefully, it can continue over the next year. Quite frankly, bills like this don't get done every day, and they don't get done by accident. They get done by leadership and folks working hard. I thank both of you. If Senator CANTWELL is listening, thank you very much for the work that has been done.

I am very proud to stand here on behalf of countless Montana small businesses and community members who had a crazy idea a few years ago about not wanting an out-of-State mining company—actually, not even wanting an out-of-country mining company, a foreign mining company—to expand the mine on the doorstep of Yellowstone National Park. I am standing here today to tell them that I heard them. I listened to them, and I was not going to stop until this bill was signed into law.

I want to take you back about 4 years. A group of small business owners who cared about the future of their community got together after they caught wind of two mining companies that were planning to expand their operations on nearby public land, which threatened the area's rapidly growing outdoor economy—one of the fastest growing economies in the State of Montana. This mine expansion was set to take place in a place we call Paradise Valley. That place is called Para-

dise Valley for an obvious reason. It truly is a piece of paradise. It is the headwaters of the Yellowstone River, which is one of the longest undammed rivers in the world. Paradise Valley is flanked on both sides by legendary mountain ranges: the Gallatins and Absarokas. It is the gateway to our Nation's first national park, Yellowstone.

These business owners—who ran fly shops, breweries, guide and outfitter businesses, and dozens of other local hangouts—were relying on literally hundreds of thousands of visitors to flock to this region to experience something they can experience nowhere else on Earth. They were rightly concerned that multiple large-scale mining operations would put their local economy at risk and, in fact, put them out of business.

I went in October of 2015 and met with these folks. I listened to their concerns that these mines would devastate their businesses and the breathtaking landscape in which they have chosen to live. In that moment, it was clear to me that the community needed permanent protection. So I announced my intent to introduce a bill—one of the bills that is in this lands package that we are taking up here today—to do exactly that: Provide permanent protection for Paradise Valley.

After months of working together, this bill became known as the Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act. This bill is a result of collaboration; it is the result of hard work, and it does exactly what is in the title. It will protect the gateway to Yellowstone by permanently eliminating the ability of proposed mines to expand onto public land near the doorstep of our Nation's first national park, Yellowstone.

Responsible, natural resource development plays an important role in Montana's economy, but there are simply some places where you should not drill or dig, and one of those is at the doorstep of Yellowstone National Park. By permanently protecting the gateway, we can protect thousands of jobs and billions of dollars that flow into Montana's economy every year.

Senator MANCHIN talked about the impact of the outdoor economy on West Virginia. We are very much a part of that outdoor economy. Fly fishermen spend more than \$70 million annually at these local businesses while trying to earn the respect of Yellowstone River's brown, rainbow, and cutthroat trout. In total, the communities in Park County see nearly \$200 million pumped into their local economy every year, a trend that continues to rise and rise rapidly.

Quite frankly, if you haven't been there, I will just explain it this way to you: God doesn't make places like this everywhere. It is a special place. It is a place so special that the people who live there understand that it could go away with one bad decision. So we need to protect it and protect those small businesses and protect that way of life.

That is why this week, as we pass this lands package that the Yellow-

stone Gateway Protection bill is a part of, these business owners now can sleep at night, knowing that the businesses they have built over the past many decades will continue and they will be able to continue to look for the opportunity that God has created into Paradise Valley.

But this Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act isn't the only provision that Montanans are fighting for. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is the best conservation tool this country has. It does a lot of really good things, including access to public lands, including making sure we have more of our hunting, fishing, and hiking spots available to folks who don't have to be millionaires. Since this Land and Water Conservation Fund was founded some 5 decades ago, LWCF has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to increase outdoor activities on our public lands. We have used it to preserve tens of thousands of acres of the world-class elk habitat in central Montana.

We invested LWCF dollars to increase fishing access sites along the rivers that Norman McLean made so famous in "A River Runs Through It"—the Blackfoot and the Missouri. LWCF is a driver of Montana's ever-growing, increasing \$7 billion-a-year outdoor economy. Best of all, it is paid for by offshore drilling fees, so it doesn't cost the taxpayer a dime.

Despite all of this success, the majority has allowed LWCF to expire twice in the last 4 years. I will tell you that this uncertainty has taken a toll on Montana's hunters, hikers, anglers, and businesses, which rely on our Nation's best conservation tool.

This lands package will again guarantee that LWCF will never expire again. It permanently reauthorizes this very successful initiative, and it guarantees that Montanans and all Americans have the long-term ability to expand and protect public access for future generations—ecosystems that, by the way, may not be around in another 10 or 20 years.

Passing this legislation is a big win for our public lands and for the outdoor economy, but our work is not done yet. We have more work to do.

Permanently reauthorizing LWCF is very, very important, but where the rubber really meets the road is LWCF funding.

LWCF was authorized to receive \$900 million some 50 years ago. In the President's budget last year, he proposed \$8 million for LWCF. Remember what I just said. Over 50 years ago, it was meant to have \$900 million. Last year, the President's budget proposed \$8 million—a cut of nearly a half billion dollars from the previous year.

After Congress rejected that proposal and it appropriated a little over \$400 million for LWCF, nearly every Member of the majority, except one, right after we put those dollars in, voted to rescind a chunk of those dollars.

So the fact of the matter is that without mandatory funding, our public

lands will remain a victim to this political seesaw.

Save for the sake of our public lands, for the sake of our kids, and for the sake of clean air and clean water, I think this bipartisan lands package serves as a launching point toward mandatory funding for LWCF.

I know there is already a bipartisan bill out there that does exactly that. So I would just say that we have part of the job done. We ought not to be taking victory laps for doing part of the job. We have more work to do, and that is to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and, hopefully, we will get a bipartisan effort to do exactly that because these are important investments. They are investments that will maintain a quality of life not only today but tomorrow, for future generations and for them the opportunity to reap the kind of economic rewards that we do because of the foresight and vision of generations that came before us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

ORGAN DONOR PROCUREMENT

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I rise today to express my dissatisfaction and disappointment over what is a life-and-death matter for many Americans. My disappointment is about the actions recently taken by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the action they took was reinstating the organ procurement organization LiveOnNY.

I am a Kansan. This is not an organization that is located in my State, but this decision by CMS, when combined with recent policy changes from the Organ Procurement and Transplant Network, misses the mark, and it misses it widely. We should be improving the organ procurement process and increasing the number of available organs for transplant rather than expanding the distance organs travel and moving additional organs from high donation areas to low donation areas.

CMS' recent decision to renew this contract, which was initially meant to be canceled due to years of poor performance, is troublesome. This organization was the only organization out of the 58 organ procurement organizations to have a contract canceled for poor performance, which was only done after numerous reprimands and penalties that failed to lead to improvement.

Conversely, it was reassuring that CMS was finally going to take some responsibility toward ensuring that donor organizations are adequately performing their jobs and protecting patients. However, CMS quickly reversed course and abdicated their duty to protect some of our Nation's most vulnerable patients when they announced they would reinstate this license.

Our Nation continues to face a shortage of organ donors. We need more donor organs, but our agencies and or-

ganizations, which should be demanding accountability and improvements, continue to turn a blind eye to a culprit, and that is the consistent failure to live up to expectations and to waste organs that could save lives.

This failure to address this issue increases wait times for patients who need organs and causes unnecessary stress and anxiousness for those who are on that waiting list for a potential organ at a time when they grow sicker and sicker.

Health and Human Services, CMS, or the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services, HRSA, OPTN, and UNOS are all abbreviations for organizations that share the blame for the predicament our country finds itself in.

This is perhaps the most important part of what I want to reiterate or state again on the Senate floor: These organizations have decided that instead of pushing organ procurement organizations to do their job, they will simply draw more organs away from areas with quality donor organizations and high donation rates—places in the Midwest, places like Kansas, places like Missouri. So the solution to a problem—the lack of organs to be transplanted—is not to get more people to donate organs and to improve the organizations responsible for those donations but, instead, to take organs from places that are doing their job and transmit them across the country.

I have written to and am waiting on responses from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Mr. Azar. There are two letters, in fact, that remain unanswered.

The first letter was sent by Senator BLUNT and me expressing our concern at OPTN's decision to ignore transplant experts and push through a dangerous new policy related to liver allocations for donation.

The second letter, signed by a quarter of the U.S. Senate, expresses broad concern with OPTN's process and the reasoning behind a proposal that appears to disadvantage areas that have actually done their jobs.

This new policy punishes those who are successful in procuring organs for donation and rewards those who continue to fail and do not appear to attempt to make improvements.

Let's recall that the new policy that we are complaining about was rammed through by OPTN and UNOS, and it will simply shift donated organs, like livers, to wider areas across the country while doing nothing to improve the donor rates countrywide or to improve the performance of OPOs. This is simply an avoidance of the problem, not a solution to it.

CMS has failed to conduct proper oversight of organ procurement organizations, leading to organ shortages that carry a real cost in patient lives, who die while waiting on transplant lists.

This is a matter that affects many States, and it is time for us to have answers from those who make these deci-

sions and who make decisions without input from those affected.

Again, I ask my Senate colleagues to pay attention to this issue—liver transplants, something that will make a difference in the lives of many Americans in your States and in mine.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

FAIR COMPENSATION FOR LOW-WAGE CONTRACTOR EMPLOYEES ACT OF 2019

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, last night President Trump delivered the State of the Union Address, and he talked about a lot of issues, including immigration and national security, healthcare, and prescription drugs. He talked about the need for bipartisanship. While I don't always agree with the President, I do agree that we should seek bipartisanship where we can, and today I would like to address one area that is ripe for bipartisan action.

I am so pleased that Senator BROWN, Senator VAN HOLLEN, Senator WARNER, Senator CARDIN, and Senator KAINE have all played key roles in the effort I am going to talk about this afternoon, and many of them will be joining me today on the Senate floor. In addition, Senator CASEY will be joining us, and I am so glad that he is adding his voice.

So many Americans suffered during the wasteful and unnecessary government shutdown that recently ended, but for one group of Americans, the shutdown isn't over. These Americans are employees of Federal contractors. Now, in previous shutdowns, Federal contractors didn't receive backpay, and they haven't received backpay after this shutdown, either. Now, that is not fair, and several of my colleagues and I are determined to fix this. So over the next hour or so, my colleagues and I will come together on the Senate floor to talk about the importance of providing backpay to the employees of Federal contractors who lost over a month's worth of wages.

Thousands of Federal contract employees work shoulder to shoulder with Federal employees to make the government work. They clean office buildings, provide security, serve millions of meals a year, and do countless other jobs.

In an op-ed published today, Congresswoman AYANNA PRESSLEY, the sponsor of the House companion to our bill, and I shared a story that we heard from Tamela Worthen, a security guard at the Smithsonian Institution. Tamela said that she was worried that she would fall behind on her mortgage and car payments, ruining the good credit that she had worked so long and hard to build. As she spoke, beads of sweat started rolling down her face. We were wondering: Was she nervous about speaking in front of a crowd?

But, no, as Tamela explained, she is diabetic and has high blood pressure. Without her regular paycheck, she hadn't been able to afford the copay for

a doctor's appointment to have her blood tested and her prescription renewed. So she was going without her medicine.

Too often, these Federal contract workers are invisible to the public, but I want them to know that those of us speaking on the Senate floor today haven't forgotten about them.

Now I would like to read a little bit of a letter that I got from a constituent in Minnesota named Annie. Annie is a chemist who works as a Federal contractor at the Environmental Protection Agency in Duluth, MN, and she wrote me a powerful letter about how the shutdown affected her. Here are a few pieces of what she shared.

Annie wrote:

I look forward to my job because I am surrounded by colleagues who are passionate about their work and want to make a significant change towards bettering our environment. . . . This work contributes to a large collaborative effort of tracking and monitoring the health of the Great Lakes, a priceless freshwater resource.

Annie went on to say:

My frustration with the shutdown stems not only from a personal angle, but also from the halt it has put on environmental research.

She says:

I am losing wages that I count on each month to make significant payments towards my student loans and contributions to my savings, including my retirement savings. I can honestly say I never thought I would be applying for unemployment, especially at 31 years old, but today I did just that. Of course, collecting unemployment is better than no wages at all, but it is still a far cry from earning my normal income.

Annie finishes by saying:

The irritation I feel about the shutdown extends beyond lost wages. I am very passionate about my work, and I believe that what I do is important and contributes to a critical subject: The environment.

Now, Annie makes a great point. Federal contract workers like Annie do important work for people in Minnesota and across the country, and it is wrong for Annie to go without pay because of a shutdown fight that had nothing to do with her.

The Senate recently passed legislation to provide backpay to Federal employees authored by Senator CARDIN, and I am very honored to be able to support Senator CARDIN in that work. That bill passed without a single Senator objecting.

Now, I strongly support providing backpay to Federal employees, and it is just common sense that the contractors who work side by side with these Federal employees should get the same backpay that they deserve as well.

The shutdown was wasteful, and it made pawns of hundreds of thousands of people. Yet Federal contractors have never been made whole in any shutdown, including this last one, and we think that needs to change.

Why should these hard-working people be forced to pay the price for the shutdown?

So we are working to fix this, and we have bipartisan legislation to do so.

Here is what our bill would do. It would use an existing contracting process that is known as equitable adjustment to make sure that contractors can provide backpay to workers, with full backpay to low-wage workers and partial backpay to those who are earning higher incomes.

Our effort is gaining support every day. In the Senate, we now have bipartisan support with a group of more than 40 cosponsors and counting, and nearly 70 organizations, including the AFL-CIO, the National Partnership For Women and Families, Oxfam America, the United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society, and the United Steelworkers that have all written in support of providing backpay for these workers.

This is what their letter of support says in part: "These federal contract workers help keep our nation running, even if their paychecks aren't cut directly by the U.S. government, and they need their paychecks just as badly as federal employees and deserve the same considerations when the government shuts down."

So I want to say thank you to everyone who continues to make their voices heard on this important issue. I am especially thankful to the workers who shared their stories, like the great-grandmother who is taking care of her two great-grandchildren, the employee who was furloughed from two different jobs who now can't afford his electric bill, and the worker at risk of losing their home because they couldn't pay their mortgage.

Providing backpay to contractors is an important opportunity for Republicans and Democrats to do what is right and to come together. If you think it is wrong that hard-working people didn't get paid because of a shutdown that had nothing to do with them, then it is time for you to make your voice heard. Let's fix this, and let's fix it through hashtag "BackPayNow."

Thank you very much.

I yield to Senator CARDIN from Maryland.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, first of all, I want to thank Senator SMITH for her leadership on this issue. This involves 1.2 million contract workers who could very well not only lose their pay from the 35 days of the Government shutdown but not have any mechanism to receive that backpay.

Senator SMITH has filed legislation that is fair legislation, it works, and it is the right thing for us to do. These workers did not lose their pay because of anything they did wrong. These are the same as government workers because they are performing government work. They are maintaining our buildings, cleaning our buildings, providing security for government buildings. In some respects, these are very similar to our direct Federal workforce.

We know that this 35-day, dangerous, outrageous, and unnecessary shutdown

caused tremendous harm. We know the harm it caused 800,000 Federal workers. Over half were forced to work without pay, but they showed up and worked because they are patriotic Americans who believe very much in the mission they are doing on behalf of this country, the noble service of public service on behalf of their fellow citizens. Can you imagine trying to figure out how you are going to find money to put gasoline in your car so you can drive to work to do your service and not get paid for that day of work or how you are going to pay for your daycare or how you are going to pay for your daily expenses? But they are loyal, patriotic people who showed up every day for work. Close to 400,000 were furloughed and locked out without pay.

As Senator SMITH said, this body, with the help of the House and the signature of the President—S. 24, legislation I authored with Senator SMITH's help, the Government Employees Fair Treatment Act, makes it clear that in the event of a shutdown, our Federal workforce will get their paychecks. They will not get them timely. They are still going to be inconvenienced. They are still not going to be able to pay their bills. But they will know that at the end of the day, when government reopens, they are going to get their paychecks, as they should and as every Member of this body agreed is the right thing to do, because our Federal workforce was not responsible for this shutdown.

But it goes beyond just 800,000. It even goes beyond our contract workers. Our economy itself suffered. I had an opportunity to be the ranking Democrat on the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee. I can tell you that small businesses throughout the country were very much impacted by this 35-day shutdown. I am talking about small businesses that didn't have a direct relationship with the government or contract with the government—small businesses near our national parks.

I had a meeting with Senator VAN HOLLEN in Montgomery County, MD, with small businesses in the community. Because there were so many Federal workers who had been furloughed without pay and contract workers who didn't have paychecks, the average business that was there that day—there were many there—their business was down 20 to 60 percent. They are not going to be compensated for this.

Of course, the American people were denied the services they needed, whether it was the FBI in full force to keep them safe or food inspectors doing their work. This was a disastrous shutdown.

We can do something for the contract workers. As I said, these are people who are doing work on behalf of this Nation. They are working in our buildings. They are keeping our buildings safe. They are keeping our buildings clean. They are working for modest pay. These are not highly paid jobs.

They were not paid during those 35 days, and unless Senator SMITH's legislation is passed, they will not get compensated.

I want to thank Senator SMITH for S. 162, the Fair Compensation for Low-Wage Contractor Employees Act. It is well-drafted using existing mechanisms to compensate low-paid contract service workers. It is the right thing to do. We estimate that as many as 1.2 million people could be affected by this. This has had a major impact on their lives and on our economy.

During the shutdown last month, I received a letter from Robert Conrad, president and CEO of LJT & Associates. LJT & Associates is a midsized firm based in Columbia, MD, that is the top contractor for NASA's Wallops Island flight facility on the Eastern Shore.

Mr. Conrad wrote: "The shutdown has had a significant negative impact on our business and, more importantly, our employees and their families . . . As a result of this lengthy government shutdown our company has not been paid by NASA and other agencies for work performed in November and December 2018 and this lack of payment continues to worsen by the day. As a result, we are faced with decisions to furlough or lay off our valuable employees. Unlike federal civil servants, our employees will not receive pay for suspended work during the shutdown, making the impacts of the layoff a permanent financial burden for them and their families."

Well, let's respond to Mr. Conrad. Let's respond to those 1.2 million Americans who are doing work on behalf of all of us. The shutdown was not their fault. As we compensated our Federal workforce, let's also provide a safety net for those who lost their compensation as a result of this shutdown, the low-wage service workers.

I hope we can find a way to quickly pass S. 162, and I again thank Senator SMITH for her leadership.

Ms. SMITH. Will Senator CARDIN yield?

Mr. CARDIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Senator CARDIN, I want to take a moment to thank you so much for your leadership on this and for making sure that Federal employees get the backpay they deserve. I know that when this issue first became clear to me, you were one of the first people I called over the Christmas holiday to talk about what we might do to fix this problem. So I greatly appreciate your partnership on this, along with the partnership of so many of my other colleagues here but particularly your help on this. Thank you very much.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I want to thank Senator SMITH, who called me during the holiday recess and said: We have this problem. How do we fix it?

I really appreciated the phone call I received from Senator SMITH. She recognized that we had to build support for the legislation but also make it work right because it is much more complicated to figure out the target group we are trying to help to make sure it is drafted in the right way. She reached out to get that type of help on drafting, as well as getting support among the stakeholders to make sure the bill was properly drafted. It took some time, and now we have a bill that we can all be proud to support.

So once again, I want to thank my colleague from Minnesota for the manner in which she has gone about presenting this legislation.

Ms. SMITH. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Minnesota, Senator SMITH, for organizing this discussion on the Senate floor today to bring attention to the plight of the Federal contract employees who were locked out of their jobs for 35 days and, therefore, didn't get paychecks for 35 days, even though the bills kept coming in. I hope that we will avoid another government shutdown in the coming weeks.

We should also use this time to make sure that we repair some of the damage that was caused by the unnecessary and really shameful record-long 35-day government shutdown. It should never have happened. It caused disruption throughout the country. Small businesses, in many cases, were unable to get loans. We know that we had 800,000 Federal employees who didn't get paychecks and that Federal service contract employees went without work in many of our Agencies.

I was pleased that this body, on a bipartisan basis, adopted a measure to make sure that Federal employees receive backpay. I was pleased to work with Senator CARDIN, Senator SMITH, and others on the Republican side to get that done. That was really important. We provided Federal employees with the certainty that, at the end of the shutdown, they would all receive backpay, but we have not done anything similar for Federal contract employees, and we need to do that. Senator SMITH and I and others have introduced legislation that we hope we can incorporate into whatever agreement we reach to reopen the government that addresses the plight of these Federal service contract employees.

I just want to bring to the attention of our colleagues one of those individuals. Her name is Lila Johnson. Ms. Johnson was my guest last night at the

State of the Union Address. I invited her here to draw attention to the plight that she and others find themselves in.

She is 71 years old. She lives in Hagerstown, MD. She commutes about 2 hours a day to the Department of Agriculture, where for 21 years she has provided janitorial services to help keep the Department of Agriculture up and running and clean. She is, right now, the primary breadwinner for two of her grandchildren, who depend on her and the support she receives from her job to make sure they can put food on the table and pay for medical expenses and pay for housing. When the government shut down for 35 days, Ms. Johnson didn't get a paycheck.

She is not a highly paid employee like most of these Federal service contractors whom we are talking about. We are talking about people who are living, really, paycheck to paycheck—people who provide janitorial services and cafeteria services. We are talking about security guards and some construction workers around the country. We are talking about lower wage and middle-wage employees who work for companies that contract with the Federal Government to provide services.

So Ms. Johnson is really scrambling now to pay the bills and to keep her financial head above water. That is why I was pleased that she could join us last evening. I had hoped that, maybe, the President would have said something about service contract employees.

Many of us wrote a letter to the Office of Management and Budget, asking the OMB to use its contract authority to try to make these Federal service contract employees whole because we believed that it had some power to make contract adjustments to fix some of this problem. We don't know exactly what the extent of the OMB's authority is, and we don't know if it will use it in the administration even if it has it. That is why it is really important that we move forward and act on this legislation.

I think we all agree that it is not fair to punish people who have had nothing to do with the political dysfunction in this body and in Washington. Ms. Johnson has had nothing to do with the dispute that we have had in this body and the dispute with the President. For goodness' sake, she works for the Department of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture has nothing to do with how we most effectively provide border security. The Department of Agriculture is one of the eight or nine departments that was held hostage for a dispute that had nothing to do with the Department of Agriculture's mission.

That is why people like Lila Johnson have been caught up in something they had nothing to do with. It seems to me that the right thing for us to do is to make sure the people who are sort of caught in the political crossfire are not the ones who, at the end of the day, are punished.

I hope we will do the right thing on a bipartisan basis. We have introduced a piece of legislation. It is a bipartisan piece of legislation. It has Democratic and Republican Senators. The same is true for a similar piece of legislation in the House. So I am very hopeful that we will use the opportunity of the agreement to reopen the government. Hopefully, we will get there, and we will keep it open. I hope we will use that opportunity to address this injustice and to right this wrong.

Again, I thank the Senator from Minnesota.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I thank Senator VAN HOLLEN for being here to talk about this.

When I first became aware of this issue, which was over what was the Christmas holiday for us—Federal employees and Federal contractors were already not working and not getting paid—Senator VAN HOLLEN was one of the first people whom I called to try to figure out what we might do to resolve this, to solve this problem.

I thank you for your leadership and for all of the help that you have given me and all of us to try to figure out this problem. Thank you very much. It has been wonderful to work with you on this.

I also note that I am very grateful to see my colleague Senator CASEY here, who, I believe, also has some things to say about this.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the same topic that my colleague from Maryland and my colleague from Minnesota just spoke of. I will start by highlighting the legislation that Senator SMITH from Minnesota has been leading. I am grateful for her work and am grateful to be a cosponsor and a supporter of the legislation.

The Fair Compensation for Low-Wage Contractor Employees Act is the bill that we are talking about. I think it is critically important that we pass this legislation. The country has endured the shutdown of 35 days. Now we are in this interim period, waiting for the results of negotiations that are underway with appropriators. We wish them well, and we hope they can come to an agreement that can be signed into law so that we will not have the threat of yet another shutdown. In this case, President Trump decided to shut the government down for 35 days. That decision, I guess, was prompted by his not receiving funding or winning the debate, at that time, for the funding of his proposed border wall.

As we know, Federal employees, as opposed to Federal contractors, have received backpay. That was pursuant to legislation that was led by Senator CARDIN. I know his colleague from Maryland, Senator VAN HOLLEN, who

just spoke, also worked very hard to pass that legislation. That is good news that Federal employees have backpay.

In this case now, though, although the government has been open for nearly 2 weeks, many vulnerable, low-wage Federal contractors, as opposed to employees, are still struggling due to the lack of their backpay. They were not covered by the bill that provided backpay to Federal employees. Over 820,000 Federal workers went without pay in the 35-day shutdown. It is also estimated that some 2 million private sector employees who work at companies that contract with the Federal Government also may have gone without pay.

Although the financial future of the Federal contractors was and remains in serious jeopardy, many of their stories have gone untold. For example, a constituent of mine from Adams County, which is on the southernmost border—right on the Maryland-Pennsylvania border—is a Federal employee, not a contractor, who was furloughed, and her husband works for a private company that has a contract with the TSA. So there, in one family, one couple, you have a Federal employee, and you have an employee of a Federal contractor.

This is what this constituent said:

Because of all of this, we have taken our children out of daycare . . . so, now our daycare provider is without hundreds of dollars a month. This will keep trickling down to many others. . . . It will not just affect federal employees.

That is what a woman from Adams County said.

Then you go further east in our State to Montgomery County, a very populous, suburban Philadelphia county. This constituent is a Federal contractor. I will read part of this letter, not all of it. This constituent said: “As of now, I am back working; however, it may only be until February 15th.”

That is the day when the current continuing resolution runs out.

I will continue the letter with these words:

In these last 6 weeks, I have completely drained the family’s rainy day fund. . . . I have asked all my utilities and credit card companies to postpone my due payments. In addition, my 8-year-old daughter was concerned we are not going to be able to eat. Like many Americans we live paycheck to paycheck.

I could go on from there, but I will not. I think people understand the sentiment. Most people have some sense of the gravity of the suffering and what could be even additional suffering, but most of us can’t even begin to imagine.

The longest shutdown in American history might be over, but these Federal contractors are still struggling to put food on the table, to purchase medicine, and to pay their bills on time. That is why, led by Senator SMITH, we must pass this legislation, the Fair Compensation for Low-Wage Contractor Employees Act. The legislation would compensate contractors for providing backpay to low-wage contractor service employees who have been fur-

loughed or laid off during the shutdown.

Who are these individuals we are talking about? Here are just a few examples. They are custodians, security guards, and food service workers who work alongside Federal employees and ensure that our government runs smoothly.

We always hear a lot of talk by politicians and sometimes citizens who complain about the government, denigrate the government, and talk about how bad the government is. Then we go through a 35-day shutdown, and people realize, maybe more significantly, what the government does every day. It does, in fact, help our country run. The country doesn’t run simply because of the private sector.

When we are dealing with the aftermath of this, we have to be thinking of making those employees whole but also helping the contractors and those who work, of course, for the contractors. These Americans, just like the Federal employees, also deserve to be made whole once again. It is essential that we show our support for those workers who keep the government running, whether they are employees or contractors.

Shutdowns are harmful to the Federal workforce in both the short and long term. They pose immediate danger of destroying the economic well-being of working families. As we have heard from constituents across the country and some I just noted today, frequent shutdowns create uncertainty and dissuade people from entering public service. These are just two of the adverse outcomes or consequences.

The bottom line is that we not only need to repair some of the damage and help people by way of legislation or other actions, but we should also commit ourselves—both parties, both Houses, and it would help enormously if the President of the United States would also commit himself—to a very simple goal: no more shutdowns—no more shutdowns by anyone.

In fact, I know that there are a number of pieces of legislation that would, if not have that effect, then at least create the greatest disincentives for a shutdown to occur. It would help all of us if the President used that microphone that he has every day to make it very clear that he is committed to no more shutdowns, no more hostage-taking, and no more use of shutdowns for leverage.

If the President will not do it, the Congress has to act and send him legislation. He has the right to veto legislation, of course, but I would hope that if he receives bipartisan legislation to make people whole, to pass Senator SMITH’s bill, or to pass legislation to prevent future shutdowns from ever occurring again, he would sign all of those measures.

For purposes of today, we want to make sure that we highlight and lift up the legislation by Senator SMITH to help contractors.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. 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. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as if in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, judging by the deafening silence of Senate Republicans, you would think there was no conservative support in this country for even the most measured response to climate change. However, many prominent Republicans are actually clamoring for climate action. They are just not doing it here in Mammon Hall.

See, for example, the January 16 op-ed in the Wall Street Journal. The Wall Street Journal is not exactly a progressive lefty rag. The opening line of the Wall Street Journal op-ed is: "Global climate change is a serious problem calling for immediate national action." I agree.

The op-ed is signed by 27 winners of the Nobel Prize in economics, four former Federal Reserve Chairs, 12 past Chairs of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, and two former Treasury Secretaries. Many were appointed by Republican Presidents.

Let's look at what this bipartisan group of experts and economists is proposing.

Here is the first policy recommendation:

A carbon tax offers the most cost-effective lever to reduce carbon emissions at the scale and speed that is necessary. By correcting a well-known market failure, a carbon tax will send a powerful price signal that harnesses the invisible hand of the marketplace to steer economic actors towards a low-carbon future.

Again, I agree. We must make the price of fossil energy reflect the costs of carbon pollution. That is Econ 101. We have to do it if we are to reduce emissions as much and as quickly as we need to. This is why Senator SCHATZ and I introduced the American Opportunity Carbon Fee Act to put a price on carbon.

It is not just academic economists and policymakers who recognize that putting a price on carbon pollution is the most efficient way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Business executives agree. Few firms are more capitalist and fiercer than the legendary Goldman Sachs. Consider this from Bob Litterman, the former head of risk management at Goldman Sachs, writing recently in the New York Times:

[F]or society at large, and the government in particular, the most important and urgent

action required is to minimize future warming by creating appropriate global incentives to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels. Economists generally agree that rather than regulate behavior, it is more effective to allow individuals to choose their actions, as long as the prices appropriately reflect the costs—

Again, back to Econ 101—

including the risks posed by climate change.

To date, prices of energy have not reflected the risk of future climate changes. This is a stupid mistake. . . .

That is not very complicated economic jargon. This is the former head of risk management for one of the smartest and most capitalist firms the planet has ever seen saying that what we are engaged in now is a "stupid mistake." Again, I agree.

Republicans typically support free market solutions, and this is a free market solution. Yet, still, there remains that deafening silence from the other side of the aisle here in the Senate.

Here is the second recommendation from the economists' op-ed in the Wall Street Journal:

A carbon tax should increase every year until emissions reductions goals are met and be revenue neutral to avoid debates over the size of government. A consistently rising carbon price will encourage technological innovation and large-scale infrastructure development.

These are two things we want—innovation and infrastructure. So again, I agree. As to revenue neutral, the carbon pricing system Senator SCHATZ and I proposed is revenue neutral. Every penny goes back into the pockets of Americans—none is designed to make more or bigger government. As to innovation, a carbon fee levels the playing field so that polluters have to compete in the market on even terms with non-polluters. Competition on a level playing field will incentivize innovation in renewable energy, innovation in energy efficiency, innovation in resilient infrastructure, and innovation in low-carbon manufacturing and transportation.

This is not a novel concept. Nobel Prize-winning economist William Nordhaus showed as far back as 1992 "that a low tax on carbon, set to rise slowly, over time, could be enough to keep emissions at reasonable levels, saving us from climate change at little, if any, cost. The tax would promote innovations in new forms of power generation, and, eventually, a widespread adoption of clean-energy technologies."

The latest Republican claim is that innovation is the solution to climate change. Fine, but you are not going to get adequate innovation on the tilted playing field that the fossil fuel industry protects. Carbon pricing uses market forces to drive innovation.

What else do the economists recommend?

A border carbon adjustment system should be established. This system would enhance the competitiveness of American firms that are more energy-efficient than their global

competitors. It would also create an incentive for other nations to adopt similar carbon pricing.

Again, I agree. A border carbon adjustment system means that products from countries without a carbon price are subject to a harmonizing tariff so that they don't have an unfair advantage over domestic products. This protects American manufacturers, and, in turn, American jobs. It motivates other countries to help solve this global problem. People who say we need a global solution must look to a carbon price because it is the most efficient global solution. That is why the Whitehouse-Schatz bill includes just such a border adjustment system. By the way, we filed this bill three Congresses ago first. So we have been at this for a while. The economists' Wall Street Journal op-ed was just a few weeks ago. So we seem to have some convergence here.

The economists continue:

To maximize the fairness and political viability of a rising carbon tax, all the revenue should be returned directly to U.S. citizens through equal lump-sum rebates. The majority of American families, including the most vulnerable, will benefit financially—

Let me repeat that again—

will benefit financially by receiving more in "carbon dividends" than they pay in increased energy prices.

The majority of our families, including the most vulnerable will benefit financially.

As I already noted, the Whitehouse-Schatz plan returns all revenue to the American people. Carbon pricing is not a tax increase. Lower and middle-income households actually get more money back than they may pay in higher prices.

More than two dozen Nobel Prize winners signed this Wall Street Journal op-ed. Their economic expertise is unimpeachable. We have at least one Nobel Laureate from almost every year since the late 1990s. There are only a few missing names, and many of those names actually have endorsed carbon pricing in other venues.

You might say: OK, they are just a bunch of academics. They are all out of touch with political realities.

Well, these were all chairs of the Council of Economic Advisers to the President. When you are advising the President of the United States, you generally adopt some sense of political reality. Note that this is a bipartisan list. It includes advisers to four Republican Presidents and two Democratic Presidents. When this group of people can agree on an economic policy, you better believe it is not some fringe idea, and these experts all say that carbon pricing is a practical solution to a very real and pressing problem.

Here is yet another bipartisan list of signers on the Wall Street Journal op-ed: Fed chairs and Treasury Secretaries. We have top-level economic appointees from five different Republican Presidents, all saying that "global climate change is a serious problem calling for immediate national action" and

all saying that setting a carbon price is the best action to take. They don't write very big checks. So they don't get heard from much around here, it seems.

But let's think for a minute. What about this President? What about President Trump? What might he say? What might President Trump think about action on climate change?

This is a full-page advertisement from the New York Times from 2009. Back in 2009, Donald Trump and his children and the Trump organization all signed this letter published in the New York Times. This letter urged then-President Obama to pursue what they called "meaningful and effective measures to control climate change." It goes on: "If we fail to act now"—this being 2009—"it is scientifically irrefutable that there will be catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet." "Irrefutable," "catastrophic," "irreversible"—there is not much ambiguity there.

Well, a decade has passed since this letter, and much has changed. Now Donald Trump mocks global warming, and the GOP in Congress has fled from taking any serious action on climate change—even on policies that are as mainstream and widely supported by appointees of Republicans as carbon pricing.

How did this come to pass? Well, I was here. I saw it happen. The year after President Trump signed this letter, the Supreme Court's disastrous Citizens United decision opened the floodgates to unlimited special-interest money—money from polluters into our politics—and that changed everything.

In 2007, we had bipartisan climate bills. In 2008, we had bipartisan climate bills. In 2009, we had bipartisan climate bills. Bipartisanship was the theme of responding to the climate change problem for those years. By my recollection, we had five different bipartisan Senate climate bills kicking around.

Then, in January 2010 comes the Citizens United decision. The fossil fuel industry pushed for it, asked for it, saw it coming, and took immediate advantage of it. Before you know it, there is that unlimited money, often unleashed through dark money channels, so you don't know who is behind it, and there are the threats and promises that necessarily accompany that power. Think about it. If you are given the power to spend unlimited money in politics, do you not necessarily also have the power to threaten to spend unlimited money in politics? Of course, you do. The two cannot be separated.

So the unlimited spending, the anonymous dark money, and the threats and promises combined to shut down the Republican Party on this issue. It was like turning off the lights. From January 2010 forward, no Republican in this Chamber has been willing to get onto any serious piece of legislation to reduce carbon dioxide.

Republican voters aren't there. Republican young voters are up in arms.

Republican economic leaders aren't there. You can look across the Republican Party, and you find a strong and solid desire to address the climate problem, and you even have Republican leaders supporting a specific solution. It is just here where it stops. It is just here where political spending is so important that it has been able to overcome even the judgment of Nobel Prize-winning Republican appointees as to how to solve this.

After he received his Nobel Prize just last October, William Nordhaus, Nobel Prize-winning economist, lamented: "It's hard to be optimistic. . . . We're actually going backward in the United States, with the disastrous policies of the Trump administration."

Where is 2009 Donald Trump? Where is the guy who signed this? I want that guy back. These economists of all political backgrounds know what is going on, and they know how to fix it. The American people know what is going on, and they want us to fix it. It is time for us to take action, and it is time for us to wake up.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. 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.

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Arlington, VA.

Hon. JAMES E. RISCH,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 19-02, concerning the Air Force's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of India for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$190 million. After this letter is delivered to your office, we plan to issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale.

Sincerely,

CHARLES W. HOOPER,
Lieutenant General, USA, Director.
Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 19-02

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of India.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:

Major Defense Equipment \$26 million.

Other \$164 million.

TOTAL \$190 million.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase: India has requested a possible sale of two (2) Self-Protection Suites (SPS) consisting of AN/AAQ 24(V)N Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCM), ALQ-211(V)8 Advanced Integrated Defensive Electronic Warfare Suite (AIDEWS), and AN/ALE-47 Counter-Measures Dispensing System (CMDS) to protect two (2) Boeing-777 Head-of-State aircraft. The LAIRCM system consists of three (3) Guardian Laser Terminal Assemblies (GLTA), six (6) Missile Warning Sensors (MWS) for AN/AAQ-24 (V)N, one (1) LAIRCM System Processor Replacements (LSPR), one (1) Control Indicator Unit Replacement (CIUR), one (1) Smart Card Assembly and one (1) High Capacity Card (HCC)/User Data Memory (UDM) card.

Major Defense Equipment (MDE):

Twelve (12) Guardian Laser Transmitter Assemblies (GLTA) AN/AAQ-24(V)N (6 installed, 6 spares).

Eight (8) LAIRCM System Processor Replacements (LSPR) AN/AAQ-24(V)N (2 installed, 6 spares).

Twenty-three (23) Missile Warning Sensors (MWS) for AN/AAR-54 AAQ-24(V)N (12 installed, 11 spares).

Five (5) AN/ALE-47 Counter-Measures Dispensing System (CMDS) (2 installed, 3 spares).

Non-MDE: Also included are Advanced Integrated Defensive Electronic Warfare Suites (AIDEWS), LAIRCM CIURs, SCAs, HCCs, and UDM cards, initial spares, consumables, repair and return support, support equipment, Self-Protection Suite (SPS) engineering design, integration, hardware integration, flight test and certification, selective availability anti-spoofing modules (SAASM), warranties, publications and technical documentation, training and training equipment, field service representatives; U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical and logistics support services, and other related elements of logistical and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Air Force (IN-D-QAF).

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: IN-D-QJD, IN-D-QAA, IN-D-QAD.

(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc., Paid, Offered, or Agreed to be Paid: None.

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: See Attached Annex.