

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Chad A. Readler, of Ohio, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, David Perdue, Roy Blunt, John Cornyn, Joni Ernst, Lindsey Graham, John Boozman, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, Steve Daines, James E. Risch, John Hoeven, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, John Thune, Pat Roberts, Jerry Moran.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 18.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Eric E. Murphy, of Ohio, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Eric E. Murphy, of Ohio, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, David Perdue, Roy Blunt, John Cornyn, Joni Ernst, Lindsey Graham, John Boozman, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, Steve Daines, James E. Risch, John Hoeven, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, John Thune, Pat Roberts, Jerry Moran.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 11.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of John Fleming, of Louisiana, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of John Fleming, of Louisiana, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development.

Mitch McConnell, Steve Daines, John Thune, John Cornyn, James M. Inhofe, Pat Roberts, Mike Crapo, Chuck Grassley, Richard Burr, John Barrasso, Jerry Moran, Roy Blunt, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Johnny Isakson, Thom Tillis, John Hoeven.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls with respect to the cloture motions be waived.

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

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

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, just a couple of short weeks ago, we finally finished the fiscal year 2019 appropriations bills, and I greatly appreciate those who worked with us to get that done.

I want to talk today about the need to reach a new 2-year budget deal. We have to do that so the Appropriations Committee could then begin to work in earnest on the fiscal year 2020 bills.

We have shown that we can move the appropriations bills quickly, but we have to have the budget deal. In fact, unless we will get a budget deal, sequestration returns in fiscal year 2020. That would mean steep cuts in pro-

grams that invest in America and support working families.

It means we would have to make cuts in our defense programs for the next fiscal year—cuts of \$71 billion. This is real money. There would be a 10-percent cut in funding to support our troops and to invest in military readiness.

It would also require that we cut \$55 billion for nondefense programs in the next fiscal year. That is a 9-percent cut. The reality is, it means less investment in infrastructure, education, housing, or agricultural programs. It means less money for veterans' healthcare, protecting our environment, or combating the opioid epidemic.

These cuts are not just hypothetical numbers on a piece of paper. They affect real people and real families. They affect people in my State. They affect the people in the State of the distinguished Presiding Officer. They affect people in the 50 States represented by all 100 of us.

Of course, the worst part about that is the cuts will come at the same time we are facing significant increases in important programs that we have no control over.

For example, we have to fund the decennial census. The Constitution requires us to have this census, and we have to fund it by \$4 billion if we are going to follow what the Constitution of the United States requires us to do in conducting the 2020 census.

We have all talked about veterans' healthcare. We have had a significant increase in the healthcare costs for veterans, and we have to have significant increases in the budget if we are going to adequately fund their health.

The VA MISSION Act, which provides additional private care options for veterans, becomes effective in June of this year. That is going to cost at least an additional \$3 billion, and estimates could climb significantly higher. That is on top of the \$3 billion increase for VA medical care that we have already enabled through advance appropriations.

Then we are going to need an additional \$1 billion to ensure that an estimated 5 million people who receive affordable housing assistance can stay in their homes. In addition to these increased costs, we expect to lose nearly \$4 billion in receipts and cost savings in other programs compared to this year.

This may sound like just a whole lot of numbers. It is more than that. It means we have \$15 billion right off the bat that we must account for above this year's levels. Of course, I am sure there will be more increases that we will have to address.

As vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee, I know how hard Chairman SHELBY and I worked with Republicans and Democrats to get through the bills we had this past year. We got them done, but it was not easy staying within levels.

We have to have a 2-year budget deal. We have to negotiate it now. If we wait until the very last second to pass these bills, it will cost the taxpayers a lot more money because the Departments cannot plan. We are not going to bury our heads in the sand and pretend it is going to fix itself.

Of course, again, in the Appropriations Committee, we try to work in a bipartisan way. But we cannot responsibly do our job in the absence of cap levels that allow us to meet the needs of the American people.

Again, this is not just an accounting issue. This is the security and the well-being of the greatest Nation on Earth. It is not rhetoric; it is reality.

The budget deal has to be based on parity if we are going to pass it. It has to have equal treatment for defense and nondefense programs, as we have had in the past.

We have to invest on both sides of the ledger if we are going to create a strong national defense, a strong economy, and a healthy citizenry of the United States.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter to all Senators that was received yesterday from over 300 retired admirals and generals who agree with this premise.

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

MISSION: READINESS,

Washington, DC, February 27, 2019.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: We write as retired admirals and generals, and members of the national security organization Mission: Readiness, to urge you to support programs that help America's children grow into healthy, educated, citizen-ready adults. Particularly, we respectfully request that you reevaluate spending caps mandated by the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA) and provide balanced investments in both defense and non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs.

As Members of Mission: Readiness, we recognize the fact that the strength of our military—and our Nation—is dependent on the strength of our people. We are deeply concerned that 71 percent of young Americans ages 17 to 24 cannot qualify for military service because they are too poorly educated, medically or physically unfit, or have a disqualifying record of crime or drug abuse. The implications of this recruitment crisis were underscored last year, when the Army fell short of its 2018 recruiting goal by 6,500 soldiers. Further, in 2018 the Army missed its end strength goal for the active duty component by almost 7,500 soldiers, and the Army National Guard and Army Reserve missed their end strength goals by 8,000 and 9,000 soldiers, respectively. The shortage of qualified young people who are willing to serve will continue to erode the strength of our military, unless we address the root causes now.

NDD programs play a variety of roles in supporting and enhancing our national security by contributing directly to the health, education, and development of our youngest generation. These crucial NDD programs include:

Child Care and Development-Block Grants (CCDBG), which help low-income families afford child care. Research shows that access to quality child care has significant positive impacts on children's social, cognitive, and physical development.

Head Start and Early Head Start, which help children from low-income families access early learning opportunities and become prepared for kindergarten. Studies have found that the Head Start participants gain long-term educational benefits, including increased rates of high school graduation.

The sequestration cuts mandated by the BCA pose a direct threat to the effectiveness of these and other key NDD programs. Without a new budget agreement from Congress, NDD funding will be cut by \$55 billion compared to Fiscal Year 2019. These cuts would severely undermine the ability of programs like CCDBG, Head Start, and Early Head Start to serve children and put them on the path toward productive citizenship.

Last year, Congress worked in a bipartisan fashion to pass a two-year budget agreement that avoided sequestration cuts, provided key new investments for important programs, and did so in a balanced manner that strengthened both defense and NDD activities. We strongly urge you to follow this example for the coming fiscal years and avoid the drastic cuts of sequestration, while maintaining a balanced approach to setting discretionary budget levels.

Providing for the common defense is one of the most fundamental and important constitutional duties of Congress. By providing balanced investments across both defense and non-defense discretionary programs, Congress will continue to ensure our national security, both now and for generations to come.

Mr. LEAHY. These admirals and generals, many of whom I know and a lot of whom I do not, have been here with Republican and Democratic administrations, but they are all people who have served our Nation and care about our Nation. They are part of a coalition called Mission: Readiness, Council for a Strong America. They call on Congress to negotiate balanced investments in both defense and nondefense programs.

They wrote: "As members of Mission: Readiness, we recognize the fact that the strength of our military—and our Nation—is dependent on the strength of our people."

We have certainly seen this. You can go back to the time of World War II, when Harry Truman found that we could not find the people we needed in our military because of things like malnutrition or a lack of education; we needed to improve the nutrition programs in our schools. This is not rhetoric; it is reality.

These admirals and generals want a strong United States of America, just as I do and just as every single Member of this body—of either party—wants.

If the press reports are accurate, the President is planning to send up a budget on March 11 that not only fails to provide a constructive path forward, but it is going to be dead on arrival. If press reports are accurate, the President will, yet again, propose deep cuts to nondefense programs, even though Congress has rejected President Trump's cuts for the last 2 fiscal years. Every Republican and every Democrat knows that you have to have a balance between defense and nondefense programs.

President Trump also proposes large increases for defense programs, paid for

using a budget gimmick that his own Acting Chief of Staff, Mick Mulvaney, would rail against when he was in Congress. He says he will move large portions of the defense base budget into the Overseas Contingency Operation, or OCO, account so that it will not count against the budget caps. Mick Mulvaney and most Republicans and Democrats have said we cannot do this. It is not a recipe for success.

OCO is meant for costs associated with military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. It is there to address crises overseas. It supports our men and women deployed and in harm's way.

The OCO account should not be used as a slush fund to pay for the everyday operations of the Department of Defense or to avoid a real debate on the budget caps.

To suggest we should move billions in the base defense budget into OCO at a time when the President is actively reducing our troop presence overseas shows what a disingenuous move it is.

I went back in my notes, and I found a letter written by then-Congressman Mick Mulvaney—now the acting Chief of Staff for President Trump. He wrote this in March of 2014. It is strikingly relevant today, 5 years later. Then-Congressman Mulvaney wrote a letter signed by numerous Members. He opposed a \$10 billion increase in OCO, calling it a "misuse" of funds and an attempt to "circumvent the caps" for things unrelated to overseas combat at a time when war operations were "winding down." He opposed the gimmick. He argued for greater transparency and discipline in the budget process.

He said he would not want any President—well, of course, in that case, it was President Obama—to have this power. Now he is Acting Chief of Staff of another President, and we are told the President may propose an increase of \$105 billion, more than doubling OCO funding, as we are withdrawing troops. That is not the way forward.

Let's have an honest conversation, Republicans and Democrats together, about our needs as a nation. We have to do the hard work to set new caps. It is not easy. Every one of us will have to cast difficult votes. Well, so what? We are elected to a 6-year term. There is not a single Member of this body who, at one time or another during their campaigns, did not say something to the effect of "I am willing to cast tough votes."

Well, let us have it, this onerous conversation. Let us do the hard work to set new caps. Let us cast those difficult votes. Let us show the people who elected us they did the right thing. Let us invest in the programs. Let us strengthen our military, grow our economy, improve our infrastructure, and build the future of this country we love. Let us not use a budget gimmick to frustrate that debate. Trust me, the American people will see through that kind of a gimmick.

I am ready to have those conversations. I want to move forward with the fiscal year 2020 appropriations bills. Let's get the work done the American people sent us here to do. If we have to stay a few evenings and if we have to stay a few weekends, let's do it. It is for the greatest Nation on Earth. Let's do it. I urge leadership on both sides of the aisle, in both Chambers of Congress, to begin these negotiations now.

Then we have to take up, with urgency, a disaster package. In the last 2 years, we have had the deadliest disaster seasons in recent memory—Hurricanes Michael, Florence, Irma, and Maria, the California wildfires, volcanic eruptions in Hawaii, and typhoons along the Pacific coast. These communities, States, and territories need our help.

When Tropical Storm Irene hit Vermont in 2011, I found out firsthand how devastating natural disasters can be. Roads were washed away, towns and villages were cut off from vital services, and people's homes were destroyed.

The day after Irene, I went around the State of Vermont with our Governor and with the head of our National Guard in a helicopter, landing in small towns. Many times the only way you could get into these towns was by helicopter because roads were gone and the bridges were gone.

You would see bridges, like a child's toy, twisted and a mile from where it was supposed to be. A farmhouse that had been on the north side of the river was now upside down on the south side of the river. We were in the middle of the State, and we knew it was critical. The Federal Government provided assistance to help recovery because we are part of the United States of America.

The people of Puerto Rico and others that have been so badly damaged, these are Americans. We should stand together to help them. I am sorry we were not able to reach agreement to include a disaster package in the fiscal year 2019 minibus we passed just 2 weeks ago. We were so close to an agreement on a package—so very close, Republicans and Democrats alike. It would have addressed the needs of all impacted communities.

It broke down because the President insisted we eliminate disaster assistance for Puerto Rico. I guess he thought tossing rolls of paper towels for the people is good enough. Puerto Rico is part of the United States. It is not, as the White House described it, an island surrounded by water, I guess, as compared to those other islands. It is a part of the United States. These are American people. They have served in our military. They help us in our medical facilities. They are Americans, and they cannot be left out.

Hurricanes Maria and Irma—they had two hurricanes—devastated Puerto Rico. They destroyed the island's homes and infrastructure. They caused the deaths of an estimated 2,975 people.

It was one of the deadliest hurricanes our country has ever seen, certainly in my lifetime.

Now, we provided Puerto Rico assistance in past disaster bills, but they have so many unaddressed needs that have to be met. Many people, even after the hurricane, are still living in temporary housing. Roads, bridges, and communities still need to be rebuilt. One of the largest infrastructure projects to be undertaken on the island is the rebuilding of Puerto Rico's energy grid, which needs more assistance.

Most importantly, in the absence of supplemental assistance, we estimate that 140,000 Puerto Ricans, U.S. citizens, are going to lose nutrition assistance at the end of March.

We are the United States of America—United States of America—and this is the U.S. Senate. We are supposed to take care of all our citizens when they have crises. We do not pick and choose based on with whom we are politically aligned.

I voted for disaster relief for States that were predominantly Republican and other States that were predominantly Democratic, but I don't look at it like that. I look at the fact that they are part of the United States of America, and they had a disaster. They should be helped.

Last month, the House passed H.R. 268, a comprehensive disaster package that provided over \$14 billion to help all States and territories impacted by recent disasters to help them recover and rebuild. I worked closely with the House on this bill. I believe it will address the needs of all disaster-impacted communities.

On Tuesday, Senators PERDUE and JONES and others, working very hard, introduced a similar but not identical bill. I am taking these bills with me this weekend. I am going to review them carefully. I thank the bipartisan group of Senators—Senators PERDUE and JONES and others—for bringing the issue back to the forefront of the Senate. I am certainly committed to working with my good friend Chairman SHELBY. I also worked with Republicans and Democrats in the House Appropriations Committee. I want a package that can pass both Chambers in addressing the needs of all States and territories hit by recent disasters.

I certainly urge the majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, to commit to bringing this to the floor as soon as possible. With that, I see other Senators on the floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

REMEMBERING OTTO WARMBIER

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, in the context of the ongoing negotiations with North Korea, there has been a lot of discussion today in the media about Otto Warmbier.

Otto Warmbier was a young man from my hometown of Cincinnati, OH. This is an emotional issue for me because, through the process of trying to

bring Otto home, I got to know his family very well.

He was a young man with a lot of promise, 22 years old, and a college student at the University of Virginia. He had gone as a tourist to North Korea. He was pulled out of the line at the airport.

Here he was, a kindhearted college kid, found himself a prisoner in North Korea. He was there for about 18 months. His detainment and his sentence were appalling; unacceptable by any standards. At some point soon after being sentenced to 15 years of hard labor, from what we know, Otto suffered a severe brain injury. What happened? We may never know the details, but we do know one thing, and that is he was severely mistreated.

Who did the North Korean Government tell about the fact that he had this brain damage? No one. Unbelievably, for the next 15 months of his life, they kept this a secret. They denied him access to the best medical care he deserved, which of course we would have provided.

I was in communication with the North Korean Government during this time through their offices at the United Nations in New York. They didn't even tell us about the terrible mistreatment he had suffered and the condition he was in. They refused repeated requests for consular access that normally would have been provided to someone who has been detained, regardless of their health situation. This included denying requests, of course, from me, from others in this body and other bodies of Congress but also from the Obama administration, the Trump administration, the Red Cross, also from the Government of Sweden, which typically acts for us in North Korea as a consular service. I say that because while I support engagement with North Korea—in fact, in my experience with Otto Warmbier, it makes me even more convinced we need to have communication because we had no good lines of communication.

I support the ongoing talks with North Korea, specifically about denuclearization. I want to make clear that we can never forget about Otto. His treatment at the hands of his captors was unforgivable, and it tells us a lot about the nature of the regime. We can't be naive about what they did to Otto, about the brutal nature of the regime that would do this to an American citizen.

Of course, it is not just about Otto or other visitors. It is about how the people of North Korea are treated, many of whom also have had their human rights violated. No one should have to go through what the Warmbier family has gone through. They have been incredibly strong, by the way, through this whole ordeal. I watched them channel their grief into something constructive, exposing some of the human rights abuses in North Korea, as an example.

Throughout this ordeal, I have stood with Fred and Cindy and their entire family. I will continue to, but I also want to say today, as we discuss these broader issues with North Korea, let's keep Otto Warmbier at the front of our minds. Let's be sure he is high on our agenda and in our consciousness as we deal with North Korea and, again, understanding, because of our experience with Otto, the brutal nature of this regime.

CHINA INVESTIGATION

Mr. President, I will now talk about the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations' hearing we had today.

I am here to talk about China and the impact it is having on the U.S. education system. I chair the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which is a subcommittee of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. My colleague TOM CARPER, on the other side of the aisle, is the ranking member. We worked together on bipartisan—I believe you would say nonpartisan investigations.

We had success working on the opioid crisis in coming up with legislation to stop fentanyl from coming through the mail, the deadliest of all the drugs. We also had success in pushing back against human trafficking, leading to actually shutting down the website that trafficked more women and children than any other one, backpage.com.

Today we looked at something that is also very important for our country; that is, understanding better how these Confucius Institutes work. We issued a bipartisan report today talking about how there is a lack of transparency in how American colleges and universities manage their Confucius Institutes. These are located at more than 100 colleges and universities around the country. These institutions in America have received more than \$150 million in support from the Government of China for these Confucius Institutes since 2006.

Confucius Institutes are enterprises that engage in the teaching of Chinese culture and language, and they are at universities and colleges around the world. These Confucius Institutes are designed, funded, and primarily staffed by the Chinese Government. The Chinese Government bills them as an opportunity for cultural exchange, and the funding comes from them. It is an appealing prospect for many U.S. schools trying to meet their demand for language instruction, but we need to be careful.

There needs to be more transparency in how these institutes operate in the United States, and there needs to be more reciprocity so the United States can also provide its cultural institutions in China. That is not happening now because China has systematically shut down comparable U.S. State Department public diplomacy efforts on college campuses in China.

Let me be clear. I do support cultural exchange—we all should; it is a good

thing—with China and with the international community more broadly, but there needs to be reciprocity, and there needs to be appropriate engagement without, in this case, the Chinese Government determining what is said and what is done on U.S. campuses.

The law must be followed. That is why transparency is so important.

This morning we held a hearing following an 8-month investigation into this issue. Based on our findings, let me focus on these two issues of transparency and reciprocity—transparency in how colleges and universities manage the institutes which are controlled, funded, and mostly staffed by the Chinese Government and the lack of reciprocity in how China does not permit U.S. State Department programming in China.

Our report details how China, known for its one-sided dealings in trade—not having a level playing field in trade—also does not have a level playing field with regard to these cultural changes.

Our report documents how U.S. officials had expressed concerns about China's influence through its Confucius Institutes. Recently, the FBI's Assistant Director for Counterintelligence testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee that the Confucius Institutes are "not strictly a cultural institute" and that "they are ultimately beholden to the Chinese government." The State Department has labeled Confucius Institutes "China's most prominent soft power platform."

Higher education groups have also expressed concern. The American Council of Education, the National Association of Scholars, and the American Association of University Professors have all recommended that U.S. schools fundamentally change how they manage Confucius Institutes or consider shutting them down.

Other foreign governments have already acted. For example, the UK Conservative Party Commission on Human Rights called for the suspension of further agreements until it can complete a more comprehensive review of potential threats to academic freedom at the Confucius Institutes in the United Kingdom.

The Canadian Province of New Brunswick recently announced that it would cease its Confucius Institute operations, citing academic freedom concerns and that the program provides a "one-dimensional" view of China. Finally, an Australian State, New South Wales, is currently reviewing the Confucius Institute program, citing that it exposes children to propaganda.

These concerns are well-founded. Past statements by Chinese officials make clear the purpose of Confucius Institutes. For example, in 2011, a former member of the Chinese Government explained:

The Confucius Institute is an appealing brand for expanding our culture abroad. It has made an important contribution toward improving our soft power. The "Confucius" brand has a natural attractiveness. Using

the excuse of teaching Chinese language, everything looks reasonable and logical.

The Director General of Confucius Institute Headquarters has also commented on how the program controls messaging about controversial topics. She said in 2014:

Every mainland China teacher we send . . . will say Taiwan belongs to China. We should have one China. No hesitation.

So with regard to issues like Taiwan, Tibet, and Tiananmen Square, the Confucius Institutes stay away from those issues that are considered controversial.

We know that Confucius Institutes exist as one part of China's broader, long-term strategy, but China has invested heavily in them, giving about \$150 million to U.S. schools just in the last decade. China's other long-term initiatives include its Made in China 2025 plan, which is a push to lead the world in certain advanced technology manufacturing. The Thousand Talents Program is another state-run initiative designed to recruit Chinese researchers in the United States to return to China for significant financial gain, bringing with them the research knowledge gained at U.S. universities and companies. We plan on continuing to examine the U.S. Government's responses to these issues as well.

Confucius Institutes, by the way, do not stop at colleges and universities alone. China has also opened more than 500 Confucius Classrooms programs at U.S. K-12 schools. In fact, the Confucius Classroom program is a priority for the Chinese Government. A document obtained by the subcommittee during our investigation details a plan to expand Confucius Classrooms by seeking "top-down policy support from the state government, legislative and educational institutions, with particular emphasis on access to the support from school district superintendents and principals."

Over the last 8 months, we interviewed U.S. school officials, teachers, and Confucius Institute instructors. We also reviewed tens of thousands of pages of contracts, emails, financial records, and other internal documents obtained from more than 100 U.S. schools that were either active or recently closed Confucius Institutes.

Since our investigation started, more than 10 U.S. schools announced they would be closing their Confucius Institutes. We found that Chinese funding for Confucius Institutes comes with strings attached—strings that can compromise academic freedom. The Chinese Government vets and approves all Chinese directors and teachers, events, research proposals, and speakers at U.S. Confucius Institutes. Chinese teachers sign contracts pledging with the Chinese Government that they will follow Chinese law and "conscientiously safeguard China's national interests."

Some schools actually contractually agreed that both Chinese and U.S. law will apply at Confucius Institutes in

the United States on their school campuses. Think about that. American universities are agreeing to comply with Chinese law on their campuses. This application of Chinese law at these schools can result, of course, in exporting China's censorship of political debate and prevent discussion of politically sensitive topics.

As such, numerous U.S. school officials told the subcommittee that Confucius Institutes were not the place to discuss topics like the independence of Taiwan, Tibet, or the Tiananmen Square massacre. Put simply, as one U.S. school administrator told us: "You know what you're getting when something is funded by the Chinese government."

Investigators from the Government Accountability Office also spoke with U.S. officials, who acknowledge that hosting the Confucius Institute could limit events or activities critical of China, not just at the Confucius Institute but also elsewhere on campus.

In response to the growing popularity of Confucius Institutes, the United States initiated its own public diplomacy program in China through the State Department. The Chinese Government effectively shut it down. Since 2010, the State Department has provided \$5.1 million in grant funding for 29 American Cultural Centers in China. Through this program, a U.S. school would partner with a Chinese school to set up a cultural center, which would enable Chinese students to better understand our country, our culture.

The Chinese Government stifled the program from the start. Seven of the 29 American Cultural Centers never even opened. Of those that did open, they needed permission from the Chinese partner schools, sometimes including local Chinese Communist Party officials, just to hold events. Eventually, because of the obstacles, the State Department stopped funding the program altogether. There are four programs remaining. They are all going to be phased out entirely by this summer.

We heard some very interesting testimony today from the State Department—testimony that details the academic environment in China that has made it impossible for us to have the kind of freedom they enjoy over here. The State Department testimony aligns with the findings of our investigation.

For example, while the State Department conducts various public diplomacy programs in China, the Chinese Government has increasingly impeded access to some segments of Chinese society, including Chinese schools and universities. All Chinese institutions, including universities, have a foreign affairs officer or a "gatekeeper" that is an internal governmental office that manages contact between the non-Chinese entities and the institution. Any Chinese institutions that wish to interact with foreign government officials must obtain approval first from this gatekeeper.

The State Department even told us that the Fulbright Program, a prestigious and longstanding student exchange program, is impeded as Chinese authorities have prevented Chinese alumni of the Fulbright Program from forming a Fulbright Association, a standard practice in other countries. We even heard directly from an American educator who was detained by the Chinese police and questioned extensively about her involvement with a State Department grant. While the Department of State said they conveyed to the Chinese Government that it expects reciprocal access for U.S. diplomats in our programs, it is not happening. Obviously, more needs to be done.

While the State Department is mostly known for its overseas diplomatic efforts, it also has oversight responsibilities right here in the United States with regard to these Confucius Institutes. The State Department conducts field site reviews to ensure that foreign nationals who come to the United States on these Exchange Visitor Programs have visas that are appropriate and that they are here for the stated reason.

There are roughly 100 Confucius Institutes at colleges and universities in America, yet the State Department has conducted field visits only to two of them. At those two, they found serious problems. At the Confucius Institute, the State Department revoked more than 30 visas for Chinese visitors who were supposed to be working at the university that sponsored their visa but were actually teaching in the K-12 environment. They also discovered evidence of "fraudulent paperwork and coaching" that was a "deliberate attempt to deceive" investigators, according to the State Department.

The Chinese director coached the Chinese teachers to tell the State Department they were working on research programs that they really weren't working on at the university's campus.

State also told us it does not collect the visa information specifically related to the Confucius Institute, so we don't know how many Confucius Institute teachers there are or where they are. Again, they visited only 2 schools out of 100, and in those they found serious problems with regard to the State Department's responsibilities on visas.

Our investigation also identified failures at the Department of Education that have contributed to a lack of transparency and oversight at schools that take money from foreign governments. If a U.S. school receives more than \$250,000 from a single foreign source in 1 year, it is required by law to report that data to the Department of Education, which, in turn, publishes it on its website. The Department of Education, however, has not issued any guidance on foreign gift reporting for 14 years, the same year that China opened its first Confucius Institute, and our investigation was able to find

that 70 percent of the colleges and universities that should have reported receiving funds for Confucius Institutes from China did not; 70 percent are out of compliance. When a school fails to report a foreign gift, the Department of Justice can force the school to comply, but only at the request of the Secretary of Education. The Department of Education has never referred this type of case to them—never.

We received two important commitments at the hearing this morning. One is the Department of Education has committed to issuing new guidance to the more than 3,000 schools it oversees. This guidance is important to ensure that schools know that they are obligated to report receiving these foreign government funding sources. They also agreed to step up their enforcement on the law on reporting foreign government funds from Confucius Institutes.

The State Department committed this morning to do more to ensure visas are being properly used at Confucius Institutes around the country. Again, they conducted only two site reviews. They have to do more, and they said they will. We are going to follow up on that.

As with all of our investigations, we are developing legislation aimed at addressing the problems identified here today. I want to call attention, as I conclude, to a news report that came out just a couple of days ago. The Chinese Communist Party's central committee and the Cabinet published a document stating that the Confucius Institutes will remain "a key government policy." Specifically, the news report plans to "optimize" the spread of Confucius Institutes. While it is unclear what "optimize" means at this point, any legislation must try to anticipate the potential rebranding of Confucius Institutes or other efforts that may seek to avoid the transparency, disclosure, and reciprocity that is needed if these programs are to continue on our campuses.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

TRIBUTE TO BRUCE KING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I know my good friend from Georgia has to get somewhere, and I have to get somewhere. I will be very brief.

I want to take a moment to pay tribute. We have staffers here who are just unsung heroes. They work day in and day out. Because of their diligent work, the world and the country is a better place.

One of these people who works in quiet dignity and gets so much done and is so well respected is Bruce King. He has been indispensable at my office, and today, this afternoon, it is my unfortunate duty to say farewell to Bruce.

He has worked in the Senate in some capacity since 1984. He has worked for Judiciary, Senator Lautenberg, the Budget Committee, and as the senior

counsel for multiple Democratic leaders on the Federal budget, stretching from Leader Daschle to Leader Reid to me. In that short time, Bruce wasn't short of legislative achievement, from negotiating the balanced budget agreement of 1997 to blocking the privatization of Social Security in 2006, from shepherding health reform through the Senate to passing the financial rescue bill after the crisis in 2008.

One of our most distinguished Senators would be proud of that record. Their name would be in lights. Bruce did all of that and much more in his, as I said, quiet, steadfast, brilliant dignity.

I have never sat on the Budget or Appropriations Committees, so when I became leader, having his experience and wisdom was incredible. I have met no one who could take these complex issues and put them in terms that even someone like myself could understand, not being an expert on those things. He was able to understand the big picture and never get caught in the minutia, although he knew the minutia extremely well.

When you ask Bruce's opinion on a matter, he presents it so succinctly and persuasively that you know it is the right answer in a matter of minutes, until he decides to play devil's advocate against his first opinion and convinces you of the opposite because he is one of those staffers who has never had an ax to grind. He said: Let my Senators know both sides, and let them decide.

But we knew both sides so well and so lucidly because of Bruce's ability to take these issues and help us understand them.

He can juggle so many variables in his head at once. He can weigh the pros and cons. He has an instinctive knowledge of how to deal with the tradeoffs, and he can keep it all in a simple way.

He is a modest man. He has sat at the same desk in the Capitol for 14 years. Every day, he brings his lunch—peanut butter and jelly sandwiches—and he leaves the office at almost the same time every night to have dinner at home with Janis, his beloved wife.

Senators get the spotlight and the credit when our initiatives succeed, but so many initiatives would never have succeeded without Bruce King. Bruce, through the years, deserves an ocean of credit for his work. He would never claim a drop of it because he is a humble man.

For all his expertise, he is humble, kindhearted, and thoughtful. Everyone likes him. In all the years he has worked here, I never heard a single person say a single bad thing about him. That is a pretty good tribute in a place like the Senate.

Bruce's departure will be a loss to his friends and colleagues and to the Senate as a whole and, of course, to my office.

There is only one bad thing I can say about him. He switched his allegiance from the New York Mets to the Nation-

als. The good news is that he will be able to catch some more games with Janis, his son Aaron, and his daughter Liana.

Bruce, you are a blessing to our office, to the Senate, and to the country. We wish you the best.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, to the Democratic leader and Bruce, who is on the floor, congratulations on behalf of all the Republicans in the room.

Come down to Atlanta and watch the Braves play the Mets. We would be happy to have you anytime. Thank you for your time here.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. President, I will be very brief. Two things happen at this time of day every day in the Senate and only two. The first is that the last person having their say finally gets up and says it, which means that you all have to listen to me for a minute. When the last person speaks, they don't tell you anything new. They tell you what everybody else said in a different way. You get to hear a small speech about that.

The other thing that happens is that SHELDON WHITEHOUSE comes to the floor and talks about global warming. That happens every day. SHELDON hasn't been down here. I don't know if he is sick. I don't know where he is. I am going to replace SHELDON for a minute.

Every day goes by, and we ought to talk about climate change and things like that. I am going to talk about disaster relief, which ties right into climate change. I am not a global warming guy, except to say I think it is going on. It has been going on since the planet was created. It will be going on long since we are gone. How tough it is depends on our dealing with it—how we sequester carbon, how we manage carbon, and how we have businesses and industries find new ways to fuel their industries and fuel their mechanisms, and things like that.

Tell SHELDON when you see him that I came down to talk about how we do need to address these things. It is all of our responsibility. We can address it in a positive way, just like we did in the Montreal Protocol, where 25 years ago we got rid of fluorocarbons that were drilling a hole in the atmosphere and causing us to have terrible cancer of the skin.

Tell SHELDON I have listened to him. I heard some of his great speeches. Mine is not nearly as close to how good his are. I wanted to make sure a day didn't go by without our saying what SHELDON says.

I want to talk about the disaster bill that Senator LEAHY, only a few minutes ago on the floor, talked about, and I want to talk about the urgent job we need to do in the Senate.

We had terrible disasters in the South and Southeast 3 years ago. We had hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes. Billions of dollars were lost in South

Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, and other locations. We failed to meet the disaster demands that we have to help those farmers and ag producers and business and industries to get back on their feet.

We now have a dire crisis. We have an emergency in the Southeast. It is time we got the disaster bill that we have been trying to pass for a year passed. We had it as a rider twice. We had it as a rider on the bill that was going to end the shutdown. At the last minute, it got negotiated out of the picture, not because it was a bad bill but because nobody would leave it in there and it did free up some money.

We have until March 15 to get it done. If we don't, there are going to be farmers in most of the Southeast who are going out of business. Industries that this Nation depends on will be terrible. You will pay way too much for your food. I don't know about you, but if you don't have nutrition to go with the energy you need, you don't have anything.

I am here to plead with every Democrat and every Republican that when we get the bill to the floor—and it will be some time before March 15—to support the disaster relief bill for the Southeastern United States and for Puerto Rico. The Democrats wanted so badly to add Puerto Rico to it, and the President signed off on that part. So we don't have a problem with the executive branch. I ask you to support all of the other provisions in it to see that those who were so badly damaged get their relief.

Let me tell you what that relief is. I am not talking about a handout. As an example, I am talking about the pecan industry that is housed in my State of Georgia. It is a tremendous industry in Asia. It is a tremendous export in the United States, with a tremendous balance of payments which contribute to our country. Well, 70 percent was wiped out. It takes 15 to 20 years to replace a pecan orchard. They have to start growth from a seedling to be a full, maturing tree to produce the crops to get to the marketplace.

Some of our crops are annual crops. A lot of them are long-term longevity crops. It is very important that we get them back on their feet. We will reclaim our place in the marketplace, but if we don't, somebody will take it away from us. Maybe it is Egypt, maybe it is India, or maybe it is somebody else.

I am down here to say that climate does change and we can do something about it by addressing carbon. And the economy changes. We can do something about it by helping industries.

When disasters come, if they are not responded to quickly and resolutely, they end up causing big losses to everybody in business, in productivity, and in our industries.

I want to ask everybody on the floor to please join me—hopefully, before the 15th or at least by the 14th of March—

to support the disaster bill that passed. Senator SHELBY, Senator LEAHY, myself, Senator PERDUE, and Senator RUBIO, and many others worked very hard on this to bring it together to get the pieces that were missing in place.

I want to thank, particularly, Senator SHELBY and Senator LEAHY for the time they and their staff have given us in the last couple of weeks to try to recover from the vote 2 weeks ago, when we lost what we thought was a solution to this problem.

Mr. President, I appreciate the time on the floor.

I yield to the distinguished Senator from Delaware.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I want to recognize the wisdom and insight from my friend and colleague from the great State of Georgia. We have unmet disaster needs in this country. I look forward to working with him to achieve the relief of the disaster impacts on the Southeastern United States and other States.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about climate change—to talk about something that is a pressing and real problem that affects everyone in this country, and, in fact, in our world. It is a challenge that we can't afford to ignore any longer because the health of our families, our economy, our environment, and even our national security, quite literally, depend on our ability to address it and address it promptly.

After a year of recordbreaking extreme weather in 2018—when we saw rising average temperatures fuel California's deadliest wildfire season on record, when Florida was faced with the strongest hurricane ever to reach that State's panhandle, and when farmers in Delaware and across the country faced challenges due to severe flooding and drought—it is clear that we can't afford to sit back and do nothing about climate change while the American people pay the price.

The costs of our inaction are real—real in human suffering, real in disaster recovery spending, real in lost economic opportunity, and real in the burden borne by our Armed Forces around the world.

Yes, there is a clear link between climate change and national security. The Pentagon has consistently pointed to climate change as a real national security threat that will make the military's job around the world harder. National security leaders from across administrations, both Republican and Democratic, have warned that climate change acts as a "threat multiplier," increasing global instability and weakening fragile States as climate change leads to more extreme weather events and scarcer food and water resources.

In many ways, these findings echo themes about climate change that we already know—that it is already happening, that it continues to get worse,

that it is going to cost us dearly, and that we can do something about it. It is that last point that I want to focus on. We can do something to stop the disastrous impacts of climate change, so long as we recognize it and work together in a bipartisan way to develop, take up, debate, and pass meaningful legislation that can make a difference.

Democrats have a broad range of bold and new policy proposals and of tested and fully developed policy proposals to address climate change. Many of them are bipartisan.

I wanted to come to the floor today to talk through 4 different bills that I have cosponsored—some that are relatively new and some considered across several Congresses—that are positive, constructive steps forward we can take to address climate change.

The first, and probably my oldest bill in this field, is called the MLP Parity Act—a catchy name, I know. It has five Republican colleagues who have cosponsored it now over three Congresses. This bill expands to renewable forms of energy, to carbon capture and sequestration, and to renewable and so-called clean energy a popular and long-established tax tool for financing energy projects that the oil and gas and pipeline sectors have enjoyed for decades. It would level the playing field. It would stop picking winners and losers in terms of energy tax policy. It would be, literally, an "all of the above" energy financing strategy. If enacted, it would be the first permanent change for the financing of clean energy projects in the U.S. Tax Code—potentially, worth billions of new private investment in renewable forms of energy.

It is also cosponsored by the Republican chair of the Energy Committee, Senator MURKOWSKI, the Republican chair of the Banking Committee, Senator CRAPO, and three other colleagues from across the country. We have five Democrats and five Republicans. It has had a hearing in front of the Energy Committee and a hearing in front of the Finance Committee in previous Congresses. This is the sort of solid, scored bipartisan bill that would be a meaningful step forward in addressing climate change.

Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM and I have introduced the IMPACT for Energy Act to create a private foundation to support cutting-edge energy research and technology commercialization. Why would we do this? What am I talking about?

Well, a guy named Bill Gates, one of the greatest inventors and innovators in American history, wants to deploy private investments and foundation investments alongside the Department of Energy, in partnership with a lot of other individuals, to significantly accelerate the cutting-edge research being done at our National Laboratories through the Department of Energy.

This is a tool that several other Federal Agencies already have. It is a so-called private foundation that allows

them to marry up private sector dollars—foundation dollars—with Federal dollars to leverage greater impact. This private foundation can go out and raise that additional money and add it to the energy R&D already being funded by the Federal Government.

I also want to applaud the hard and bipartisan work of my colleagues, led by Senators MURKOWSKI and CANTWELL on the Energy Committee, on a comprehensive energy bill with a wide range of policy ideas that can move us forward. It has several components that I contributed and that would help to address climate change. I very much hope that in this Congress we can finally take up this bipartisan bill and see it signed into law.

Last, but in some ways most importantly, I want to mention a bill I offered at the end of the last Congress with my friend and former colleague, the Senator from Arizona, Jeff Flake. Despite our very different ideological, cultural and contextual backgrounds—we are from different States, from different faiths, and from different perspectives on the role of government and society; he is a real conservative, and I am a progressive Democrat—we still managed to come together and introduce a bill that addresses the cost of ignoring climate change and the impact it will have on the people in our home States.

We offered the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act. It is a commonsense bill to achieve significant and sustained emissions reductions and to help to mitigate the worse impacts of climate change. Our bill would accomplish this by using a free-market approach to pricing carbon pollution that would spur economic growth and put money back in the pockets of American taxpayers. Similar legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives by a bipartisan coalition. I look forward to reintroducing this bill in this Congress.

The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act should be the centerpiece of a robust, bipartisan climate agenda because it aggressively tackles emissions while optimizing economic growth and income for working families. We estimate that our bill would reduce emissions by 90 percent by 2050, while creating as many as 2 million net new jobs in the next decade.

I believe this is an efficient way to use market forces to address the very real problem of climate change while creating jobs and opportunities for American workers. Frankly, an outright ban on nonrenewable sources would be inefficient and disruptive to workers from all sectors, but, in particular, across the building trades and other vital sectors of employment. In contrast, sending a strong market signal in favor of lower carbon or carbon-neutral energy would spur investment and growth in these technologies by the private sector and lead us toward a lower carbon future through competition.

We don't need to choose between clean energy and economic growth or between combating climate change and creating jobs. These two goals are not permanently and mutually exclusive. They can go hand in hand if we craft the right policies. Still, we cannot move abruptly away from an economy that relies heavily on fossil fuels without having a real and coordinated plan for the very people—the millions of Americans—whose jobs will ultimately be impacted by that transition.

Fortunately, a gradual transition to a clean energy future can also be an effective job creator. In 2017, the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors alone employed 2.8 million Americans. If we place a price on carbon and then let the market work, we will create jobs across a wide range of industries, occupations, and geographies.

As we work to deal with the effects of climate change by moving to a cleaner energy and infrastructure economy—an economy that is more resilient—we will need to rely on workers who are already in place in many of these industries. We will need building trades professionals to construct and maintain our new resilient and clean energy infrastructure. We will need manufacturing workers to build these more energy-efficient products. We will also need scientists and engineers to help research, develop, design, and deploy these new technologies. These workers bring real experience and skills to the table, and we must ensure that these skills translate into new, good jobs and that the workers in these new jobs are able to organize for fair competition, for fair compensation, and for fair work conditions.

We can't tackle climate change alone. The United States is the largest historic emitter of carbon dioxide, but our emissions have been declining in recent years. Meanwhile, China has whirred past us, and China and India and other countries are rapidly catching up in their carbon emissions. We need an approach that incentivizes these countries to reduce their emissions as well. The United States is a world leader in science and technology and innovation. We need to develop and advance new technologies—carbon-neutral technologies like small, modular nuclear reactors and carbon capture and sequestration—that we can export. Then we need to find ways to encourage countries like China and India to modernize and industrialize while also reducing their emissions.

There is good work taking place in this area, and there are good solutions we can act on together. We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a serious, thorough, deliberate, and thoughtful way. We need to be prepared to adapt to the ongoing impacts of climate change. We need to make sure American workers and families aren't left behind or are burdened by Federal climate policy.

This administration, unfortunately, strikes me as taking us backward. We

are voting on an EPA Administrator in this Chamber who is failing to take action on climate, even on action that is widely supported by industry. Our President just proposed a National Security Council initiative to counter the consensus around climate change and refute the idea that greenhouse gases are harmful to the environment. I shouldn't even need to say this, but that just isn't how science works.

That is why, here in the Senate, we need to take the opportunity to lead and to have voices from both parties in Congress and in this country who want to take bold steps to address the climate. The hard part is going to be squaring these big, bold ideas with political reality. That is hard, but there are ways we can do it. Instead of being silent, we should bring this conversation to the forefront. Instead of debating whether climate change is real, we should be passing bipartisan bills, like the ones I have mentioned today, that can meaningfully address climate change and improve our economy.

Climate change is a serious threat to our economy, to our security, and to our way of life. We need leadership from all parts of our society and government to tackle it, and we must do our part in the Senate. I look forward to having conversations across the aisle, to working together, to identifying real solutions to the challenges before us, and to creating new opportunities for America's workers.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

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.

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

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

WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I have often said healthcare is not political. It is personal, and there is no part of healthcare that is more personal than the decision if, when, and under what circumstances to have a child and who decides the medical course of action in a serious medical crisis.

These decisions need to be made by women, their families, and their doctors. They should not be made by politicians who are more focused on their own political advantage rather than medical tragedies facing pregnant women at the end of pregnancy who want desperately to have a child.

Our Republican friends know very well that nobody—and I mean nobody—in this Chamber supports infanticide. No one. In fact, in 2002, Congress voted unanimously—100 Members, including myself—to reaffirm that it is illegal, period. Suggesting otherwise is insulting and, frankly, disgusting, and it is beneath the dignity of the U.S. Senate.

How dare the majority pretend to care about the health of women and

children. If the Republican majority cares about the health of moms and their babies, why are you continuing to try to take their healthcare away? The President and the Republican majority have tried again and again and again to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Let me remind you that before the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies could, and most of the time did, refuse to cover maternity care as basic healthcare for women, leaving parents with bills of tens of thousands of dollars for an uncomplicated birth.

As a member of the Senate Finance Committee, I was proud to author the provision requiring maternity care in the Affordable Care Act. I remember the debate. I remember a very specific debate with a former colleague from Arizona, and I remember Republican efforts to strip that provision to cover maternity care from the Affordable Care Act. Fortunately, they were not successful. Now the administration is legalizing and offering junk insurance plans that treat being a woman as a preexisting condition again.

One study found that none—none—of the newly approved plans cover maternity care. Maternity care is not a frill. It is basic healthcare for women, and if we are seeing more and more of these healthcare plans being put on the market, where women assume they are going to be covered and once again will not be, that is outrageous.

Why aren't we passing a bill to guarantee that prenatal care and maternity care are covered for moms and babies as essential healthcare in every insurance plan? I assure you, this medical care is essential, and until parts of the Affordable Care Act began to be unwound by the administration, it was viewed as essential care for every woman.

How dare you pretend to care about the health of women and children while voting to dramatically slash Medicaid and healthcare for low-income working families. When you gut Medicaid, you are keeping moms and babies from getting the healthcare they need. In fact, Medicaid provided prenatal care and maternity care for 43 percent of American moms and babies born in 2016—43 percent. Why aren't we voting to strengthen Medicaid? Why aren't we voting to strengthen Medicaid healthcare for moms and babies? Why isn't that being brought to the floor?

A few years ago, the Senate Finance Committee reported out a bill that I led with Senator GRASSLEY called the Quality Care for Moms and Babies Act. This bill would create a set of maternal and infant quality care standards in the Children's Health Insurance Program and Medicaid. The goal is simple: improving maternal and infant health outcomes. Shouldn't we all want to do that?

Let me be clear. We have no uniform quality standards right now across the country for almost half of the births that occur every year. The Quality Care for Moms and Babies Act will help

make sure every mom—every mom—gets the best pregnancy care possible and every baby gets a healthy start. Why isn't that a top priority for action in the U.S. Senate, to protect the health of moms and babies?

Let's also be clear. We have a real healthcare crisis that we need to address in this country. In most of the world, fewer and fewer women are dying from child birth but not in the United States. In fact, our maternal mortality rate is climbing. More women are dying, and our infant mortality rate ranks a shameful 32 out of 35 of the world's wealthiest nations. The United States of America is 32 out of 35 countries—wealthiest countries in the world—in the number of infants that are dying in birth. That is something we need to have a sense of urgency to act on.

There are a lot of things on healthcare. There are a lot of things to improve outcomes for children and moms and give them a healthy start and a healthy life that we should be doing right now, as well as stopping the administration from undermining basic healthcare for women and children. It is time to stop the cynical political stunts and start protecting—really protecting—the health of moms and babies.

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.

Ms. HIRONO. 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. HIRONO. Mr. President, I am glad to join Senator STABENOW, who was on the floor just now, to respond to the shameful lies and gross exaggerations that have been claimed by some on the other side of the aisle.

Earlier this week, we voted on legislation that some of my colleagues claimed was needed to outlaw infanticide—the killing of babies. How absurd. It is, and has always been, illegal to kill any human, including infants.

So what was in that legislation we voted on earlier this week? To honestly discuss the bill, we need to have a factually and medically accurate conversation about abortion.

A healthy fetus becomes potentially able to live outside the womb at about 24 weeks of pregnancy. Very few abortions occur after that—less than 1 percent—and generally are performed either because the fetus has a fatal condition or the pregnant woman's life or health is at severe risk. These are heartbreaking situations involving very wanted pregnancies—hardly the time for the heavy hand of government to reach into our wombs.

Under this bill, doctors will be required to resuscitate infants born with fatal conditions, even if the parents did not want these measures that could

prolong their infant's suffering and instead wanted to spend the limited time they had with their baby comforting their child and holding them close.

How dare anyone pretend to know what care is best for these families instead of trusting them and their doctors to decide. How dare Congress interject itself into a decision we have no business deciding for others. Yet this is exactly what this bill would have done.

I encourage my colleagues to read stories from women who have been speaking up about their experiences with abortion later in pregnancy. These stories are usually found on the internet as well as in the national press, as more women feel under attack and are coming forward to tell their stories. Perhaps, in hearing from these women, my colleagues will realize what these women need is compassion, not condemnation.

Stories like that of Dana Weinstein, who bravely told her story to CNN. Years ago, Dana and her husband learned at 31 weeks that their daughter's brain had a severe defect. Doctors told the couple their daughter would not be able to suck or swallow and would most likely suffer from uncontrollable seizures upon birth. They heard what a resuscitation order would entail. They listened to what an existence, short-lived or otherwise, would look like. They were briefed on hospice care.

After the diagnosis, the kicks in Dana's belly, which had given her so much joy, became unbearable. She feared her daughter was seizing and may be suffering. Ultimately, Dana and her husband decided to get an abortion. For this baby they loved, it felt like—in their words—"a more peaceful path for her passing."

These are the stories. Compassion and understanding are what is needed in these instances, but instead of compassion, what my colleagues have offered this week is inflammatory political rhetoric and shaming and intimidating women and their providers who care for them in an attempt to score partisan points.

President Trump—never missing an opportunity to score partisan points—weighed in on Twitter claiming that Senate Democrats "don't mind executing babies after birth."

Today former Governor Scott Walker said to a crowd at the Conservative Political Action Conference that "people are taking already-born babies from the hospital and aborting them there"—a comment that doesn't even make sense.

Republican National Committee chair, Ronna McDaniel, chimed in at the same conference, calling the choice that women like Dana make murder. These charges are false, incendiary, and this sort of language is intended to incite the Republican Party's base. It emboldens violence against abortion providers—violence which nearly doubled from 33 reported death threats or

threats of harm in 2016 to 62 in 2017, according to the National Abortion Federation.

The hard truth is, the Republican Party hurts women. One of the ways they are doing this is by working as hard as they can to set up barriers or to eliminate entirely safe and legal abortions wherever they can.

They demonize women who face the heartbreaking situation of needing an abortion later in pregnancy, oftentimes for medical reasons.

They want to cut off crucial healthcare dollars to providers who even discuss abortion with patients. This is a gag rule that this administration is seeking to impose.

They create loopholes to allow businesses to exclude coverage for contraception for workers, and to make sure that these and all of their other efforts stick, they pack the Federal courts with a line of aggressively anti-choice judges to uphold Federal Agency actions and State laws restricting abortion access.

Doing the bidding of these rightwing ideologue supporters like the Federalist Society and the Heritage Foundation, Donald Trump has sent us judicial nominee after nominee with records of attacking a woman's right to choose as laid out in the Supreme Court's opinion in *Roe v. Wade* and restated in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*.

These nominees come before the Senate Judiciary Committee, on which I serve, and parrot the line provided for them by the Trump administration. When asked if they will respect precedent and uphold *Roe v. Wade*, they say they will "follow the law." Then, when they get confirmed, they are in a position, with their lifetime appointments, to do exactly the opposite.

The prime and most dangerous example of this kind of bait and switch is Brett Kavanaugh—a notoriously rightwing political lawyer appointed by George W. Bush to the second highest court in the United States—the Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit.

Kavanaugh was not even on Donald Trump's original so-called short list of possible Supreme Court nominees—not the list released before the 2016 election and not the first list released thereafter. No, Kavanaugh only found a place on that list after he wrote a harsh dissent in a case involving a young refugee's right to an abortion.

A minor, then 17 years old, was being kept in the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services because she had entered the United States without documentation. Where she was held in Texas, in order to access abortion services, a minor must have parental consent or receive permission from the judge. This is called a judicial bypass—to proceed without that parental consent.

In this case, called *Garza v. Hargan*, the young woman did go through the process of going to court and receiving a judicial bypass. She had people willing and able to transport her and to

pay for the health services she needed, but the radical Trump appointee in charge, well known for his anti-abortion views, decided it would be in her best interest to find adult sponsors for her first, presumably to help her make a decision, but the Texas court had already decided she could make her own decision, and she did.

She challenged the Trump appointee and his Agency, and ultimately a majority of the DC Circuit agreed with her that she had the legal right to an abortion and the Federal Government could not delay any further.

Brett Kavanaugh, sitting on that circuit, disagreed and wrote a dissent, which must have captured the attention of those in charge of Donald Trump's Supreme Court short list because not long after his name appeared on that list.

What did he write to earn his place on the list and eventually a nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court? He wrote a dissenting opinion that falsely characterized the *Garza* case as one about parental consent, which we know was not so because a judicial bypass was already in place.

He wrote the dissent using the code words of the extreme anti-choice and anti-women wing of the Republican Party. He accused the majority on that court of creating "a new right for unlawful immigrant minors in U.S. government detention to obtain immediate abortion on demand." He was wrong. There was no new right being created.

He falsely claimed that by permitting the abortion "[t]he majority's decision represents a radical extension of the Supreme Court's abortion jurisprudence." He was wrong again. The majority decision was correct under *Roe v. Wade*.

He wrote it was not an undue burden for this young woman to be prevented from getting an abortion until a sponsor family could be found for her. This was not even a legal argument, but he based his dissent on it. That is the dissent that moved Brett Kavanaugh to the head of the line on the short list for a nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court, where he sits.

So when he came to the Judiciary Committee for a hearing, some Senators—myself included—were rightly skeptical that he would respect precedent if confirmed. At his hearing, Ranking Member DIANNE FEINSTEIN asked Judge Kavanaugh about *Roe v. Wade* and its status as settled precedent. He testified that *Roe* was "settled as a precedent of the Supreme Court, entitled to respect under principles of *stare decisis*."

He further went on: "Planned Parenthood v. Casey reaffirms *Roe* and did so by considering the *stare decisis* factors. So *Casey* now becomes a precedent on precedent."

It sure sounds like someone who will apply the precedents of *Roe* and *Casey* and others who rely on them, doesn't it? That is not so.

The very first opportunity he got, Brett Kavanaugh, as Supreme Court Justice, voted against following precedent. Not 4 months after his confirmation, Justice Kavanaugh voted in the minority in a Supreme Court case called *June Medical Services v. Gee* to allow a restrictive, anti-abortion law in Louisiana to take effect.

This law would have so restricted access to abortion that only one provider would have been left in the entire State of Louisiana of 4.7 million people. Even Chief Justice Roberts voted with the majority to block the law. That is because it was clear from recent precedent in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* that such restrictions don't meet constitutional standards.

Justice Kavanaugh's cavalier attitude to the burden that he would put on a woman's ability to exercise their constitutional right is no surprise. His callous disregard for the way unwanted pregnancies can change the lives of women and children is not unexpected, and his willingness to hew to the party line of his supporters and ignore the assurances he gave the Senate is simply par for the course with Trump judicial nominees. This is what they do. It is an abuse of power, and women across the country are paying for it.

Why do my colleagues across the aisle use this Chamber, time and again, to bring forward political shams that shame and retraumatize women who face profoundly heartbreaking situations? The will of over half of this country is 67 percent of Americans support *Roe v. Wade* and access to safe and legal abortion. Sixty-seven percent of Americans support a woman's right to choose.

How is it that Republicans continue to bring forward bill after bill and amendment after amendment that goes against a constitutionally protected right of women—of women? This is why I say Republicans hurt women.

I am proud of the vote I cast in opposition to the sham bill we voted on this week. My vote was rooted in fact and understanding about what an abortion in later pregnancy actually means. It was rooted in the understanding that when faced with these difficult situations, these decisions are best left to a woman and her doctor. These decisions should not rest with the U.S. Senate.

My vote was cast with a clear understanding that if unchecked or unchallenged, this administration and this Senate will continue to assault a woman's right to choose and chip away at it bit by bit, where it will end up being a nullity, and that is what they want.

I will continue to stand in opposition to attacks that seek to limit the personal freedom of women across the country and what would be more of a personal freedom for a woman than to exercise control over her own body?

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONFIRMATION OF ANDREW WHEELER

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss why I voted in opposition to the confirmation of Andrew Wheeler for the position of Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Clean air and clean water are not only vital to our public health; they are at the very heart of our economy. Nowhere is that more apparent than in my home State of Michigan, where we are blessed to be surrounded by the Great Lakes, a source of drinking water for more than 40 million people and the lifeblood of our State's multi-billion-dollar fishing, shipping, and tourism industries. That is why I spent my entire career in public service fighting to protect our environment.

In the Michigan State Senate, I worked to ban oil drilling under the Great Lakes to preserve our most precious source of drinking water. When I represented the city of Detroit in the House of Representatives, I fought to end harmful air pollution coming from piles of petcoke that left homes coated in dust while being breathed into the lungs of residents.

In my first term in Congress, I supported landmark climate change legislation that sought to drastically reduce deadly greenhouse gas emissions that are continuing to warm our planet at an unsustainable rate. In the U.S. Senate, I led the charge to protect the Great Lakes from pipeline spills and pressured industry to cut down their deadly sulfur-dioxide emissions that give Michigan communities some of the highest rates of asthma anywhere in the country.

I have championed these vital efforts because protecting our environment in Michigan is in the best interest of everyone, and I will never let up on that fight. There is so much more work to do and even more pressing challenges ahead of us. We cannot afford to turn back the clock on clean energy innovation or refuse to address climate change, and that is, unfortunately, what we can expect from the EPA now that Andrew Wheeler has been confirmed. His entire career has been devoted to undermining public health and environmental protections.

As Acting EPA Administrator, he is personally responsible for the most significant efforts to roll back our Nation's bedrock environmental laws in the Agency's history. He oversaw the proposed rollback of Clean Water Act protections that safeguard drinking water for tens of millions of people. He is leading efforts to weaken standards on the largest sources of greenhouse gases and to reduce protections against climate change. When he was a Senate staffer, he drafted the so-called "Clear

Skies Act," which was directly intended to undermine the Clean Air Act.

As a lobbyist for Murray Energy, Wheeler represented a company that didn't just knowingly violate environmental laws but consistently put its own employees' safety at risk by undermining basic protections for coal miners. He has even undermined the widely supported mercury and air toxics standards. These commonsense standards would have protected people, particularly children, from a well-known neurotoxin that impairs fetal brain development and reduces children's ability to learn.

Every single one of these actions has a direct bearing on human lives and has put people at risk. In Michigan we have witnessed firsthand the visceral and painful human costs when public leaders fail to keep our drinking water and our air quality safe. Just ask the people of Flint whom they would want to have in charge of protecting their drinking water. I can tell you it certainly is not Andrew Wheeler. The city, the State, and the EPA all contributed to the crisis that poisoned thousands of children through lead exposure, and now those children will suffer lasting consequences for the rest of their lives.

While I am proud that the Senate was able to come together to provide initial Federal funding to help Flint replace its lead pipes, the community needs continued support going forward. I am committed to doing everything in my power to ensure that the people of Flint are made whole, and that included my opposing this nomination. We cannot allow the failures of leadership that led to Flint's devastating crisis ever be repeated again.

The people of Michigan and of every State deserve to know that their air is safe to breathe and their water is safe to drink. Yet communities across my State and around the country are facing another emerging drinking water crisis. This time it is from toxic fluorinated chemicals, known as PFAS, that are currently unregulated by the EPA. Rigorous testing has found that 1 out of every 10 water systems in my State has unacceptable high rates of PFAS chemicals. Families across the State have been exposed to these dangerous chemicals that have been linked to cancer, thyroid and heart problems, and even autoimmune issues. But under Wheeler's leadership, the EPA has failed to take aggressive action to list PFAS chemicals as hazardous waste and to establish strong and forcible limits to protect drinking water and to limit exposure to these toxic substances.

While I work to bring Senate action to this issue through legislation and hearings, the Wheeler-led EPA thinks action can wait. Michigan families certainly deserve better. My constituents are understandably concerned about their drinking water, and they are rightfully skeptical about who will be at the helm of the Agency charged with keeping water safe.

Since Wheeler has failed to exercise the leadership needed to address the environmental concerns we face on a national level, it is clear that he is completely unprepared to lead the Agency charged with tackling the global crisis of climate change. We must confront climate change. I have been advocating for action since before I ran for Congress. It is an issue impacting our economy, our health, our safety, and our national security. I am committed to continuing to work with my colleagues to find innovative and achievable solutions to address climate change, but we also need a leader at the EPA who can find commonsense ways to address this very serious threat, to protect our environment, and to ensure that our country can remain economically competitive. We need a leader who will fight to protect the people and the interests of my State. Given his abysmal record, it is clear that Andrew Wheeler isn't the right person for the job, and that is why I voted against his confirmation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill 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. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO JEAN POLLARD

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, as you know, I try to come down to the floor every week to talk about someone in my State who is making a big difference in Alaska, a big difference in their country, and a big difference in what I believe is the best State in this country. That is just my opinion. I am sure the Presiding Officer thinks his State is the best in the country, but that is why we are all here in the Senate.

Of course, Alaska is beautiful, particularly now as the snow is on the ground and the Sun is out. It is back out and high in the sky. It is also nearly time for the Iditarod—the last great race—something, I am sure, Senator MURKOWSKI and I will be talking about on the floor in the coming weeks. It kicks off this weekend.

We know it is a beautiful and amazing State, but what really makes Alaska such a great place are the people—the people who work tirelessly for causes they believe in.

Many people don't know this, but Alaska is also incredibly diverse. In fact, Anchorage—my hometown and the State's largest city—is home to the country's three most diverse census tracts, racially and in terms of nationalities. By the way, the fourth is Queens, NY.

I will just give you an example. Last week, we had this great event called Bridge Builders. It was in Anchorage. There were all of these different ethnic communities in Anchorage coming together. I spent a lot of time there on Saturday.

We are very proud of our diversity. We are proud that more than 100 languages are spoken in our schools. Think about that if you want to talk about diversity. We are proud of the foods and the cultural events. We are proud of the unique tapestry that makes up Alaska.

We are very proud of our history, and we are also blessed to have people who work diligently for all of us to keep history alive. I can think of no better way to cap off Black History Month than to recognize someone who, for years, has been fiercely determined to unearth a very important part of Alaska's history—actually, a very important part of America's history—one that transpired in my State but that greatly influenced our Nation during a very critical time.

I want to introduce you to Ms. Jean Pollard. She is our Alaskan of the Week. Jean has brought back the story of the African-American Army Engineers of the 93rd, 95th, and 97th regiments who were in the U.S. Army during World War II and stationed in Alaska during World War II.

More than 3,000 of these brave soldiers were integral in Alaska in building what we call the Alcan Highway—the Alaska-Canada Highway—one of the 20th century's greatest engineering feats.

Let me tell you about Ms. Pollard. Now a retired schoolteacher, she grew up in Georgia. When she was a teenager, her father, who was in the Army, got transferred to Alaska. Like all Alaskan students—like our good students, our pages in the Senate—she took a class on her State's history—Alaska history—in high school.

During the class, she learned about how the Army built the Alcan Highway in 1942 to help defend Alaska and America from invasion by Japan. A lot of people don't know this. Yes, Alaska was invaded and occupied by the Japanese military during World War II in the Aleutian Islands. I am going to talk about that a little bit more.

She learned about this in high school. It was a good story, but the most important element she was taught in high school was actually left out. The highway was only able to be finished because of the more than 3,000 African-American soldiers who built it.

So after getting a master's degree in education and a minor in history and after being a teacher for decades, Ms. Pollard only learned the entire story herself when she was sitting home one Friday night watching a PBS documentary about the building of this incredible highway.

What did she learn? Again, let's go back in time. It is March 1942, 3 months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. As the war effort was heating up, construction began on a 1,700-mile-long vital link connecting the great State of Alaska—it wasn't a State then; it was a territory—the lower 48 for the war effort.

Soon a massive mobilization followed—about 10,000 Army troops. Huge

trucks, civil engineers, food, tents, you name it, were deployed to start building this road.

Then, in June 1942, the Japanese invaded Attu and Kiska Islands in the Aleutian Islands chain of Alaska, adding a new sense of urgency to the completion of the road.

These soldiers worked day and night—200 bridges, 800 culverts, through some of the most rugged terrain on planet Earth, mountains, rivers, no rest, hard, backbreaking work—and they were able to complete this 1,700-mile road that still exists today—some of you may have driven it—in less than a year.

When the road was being built, the military was still segregated, and African Americans in the Army—much like in the rest of the country—were treated as second-class citizens. They were assigned to the toughest jobs on this project, using the worst equipment. In the summer, it was full of mosquitoes, black flies, mud, and swamps.

Winter comes early in Alaska. According to the historian, Lael Morgan, the winter of 1942 was considered one of the worst winters on record since 1906 in terms of how cold it was—and, trust me, it gets cold in Alaska—and how much snow there was.

The Black troops were required to build winter barracks for the White soldiers, while the African-American troops lived in tents. When the snow fell, they couldn't get supplies, and some nearly starved to death, Lael wrote. It is reported that some even succumbed to injuries due to the cold—fatalities due to the cold.

They did so much of the hard work. However, the contribution of these great African-American soldiers and heroes were completely almost scrubbed from all of the history books. Nobody that Ms. Pollard spoke to—social studies teachers or history professors—knew anything about this history.

In Ms. Pollard's words: "They stole that history." The history books wouldn't write it. It was wrong, and she knew she had to make it right so she went to work.

As a teacher herself and a lifelong learner, she knew that bringing the story to the school system was key to keeping our history alive—accurate history. Eventually, she called the historian I spoke about, Lael Morgan—a former Alaskan who was then living in Maine and happened to be featured in that documentary that Ms. Pollard watched on that Friday evening.

Lael decided to help in a big way. Incredibly, a year later, she sold her house in Maine and headed up the Alcan Highway to Alaska. Together, and with the help of a team of others Ms. Pollard recruited, they amassed enough material to give to the school system to set the history right.

Now schools across Alaska are putting this story—this real story—into their curriculum, and now she is trying to get it required as part of a course

that the university students in Alaska who are studying education have to take.

She and her team put calls out across the internet for anyone who was involved in or had a relative involved in building the highway. She was able to track down three members of the African-American Army Engineers who were still alive. She flew to interview one of the soldiers who was 100 years old. Another one, who lives in Louisiana, traveled to Alaska in 2017 for the 75th anniversary of the highway's completion.

Recently, Ms. Pollard mentioned the names of the soldiers she spoke to back then. There was a soldier from Virginia, SGT Reginald Beverly, who, unfortunately, has now passed away. The soldier in Louisiana who came to Alaska in 2017 is Private Leonard Larkins. He has 10 children. The Alaska Highway Project will be bringing him and his three sons back to Alaska on August 3 to help him celebrate his 99th birthday.

I am in the process of drafting a Senate resolution to recognize all of the members of the African-American Army Engineers who helped build the Alcan Highway, which was so critical to protecting our Nation and Alaska.

Ms. Pollard describes herself as feisty. Others might describe her as fiercely determined. When the Alaska State Legislature, at her urging, passed a resolution commemorating these African-American soldiers who built one of the greatest engineering highways in the world, she was sitting behind some of the State legislators.

She heard one whisper to another: Have you met this Jean Pollard?

The other said: Yes, she calls me several times a day about this bill.

Julie and I were just with Ms. Pollard this past weekend, as I mentioned, at the Bridge Builder event in Anchorage—my wife Julie and I. She is very passionate, very persuasive, and we are very proud of her.

Ms. Pollard and the team that created the Alaska Highway Memorial Project are on another mission to erect a memorial in a park in Anchorage. They have the design, and they certainly have the will with her driving it, and I have no doubt they will get it done to memorialize this great engineering feat by American heroes who were not treated well by their country.

Like the story of how Ms. Pollard brought important history back to our State, the story of building the Alcan and of the civil rights in the military also has an uplifting message.

On October 25, 1942, less than 8 months after they started, two soldiers, one African American and one White, shook hands after completing this highway. Six years later, President Harry S. Truman ordered the Army desegregated, 16 years before the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Many historians now cite the work and the experience on this Alcan Highway project, and the African-American sol-

diers and White soldiers working together on a really difficult challenge, as also helping make that possible—civil rights, 16 years later.

The Federal Highway Administration calls the Alcan Highway the road to civil rights. Isn't that a great depiction?

So, Ms. Pollard, thank you and your team for bringing that history back to us. I am proud to have talked a little bit about that important history for Alaska and America on the floor of the U.S. Senate. Congratulations for being our Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar Nos. 81 through 86 and all nominations placed on the Secretary's desk; that the nominations be confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be general

Lt. Gen. Michael X. Garrett

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named Air National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be brigadier general

Col. Timothy J. Donnellan

The following named Air National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be brigadier general

Col. Stephen J. Mallette

IN THE NAVY

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. Scott M. Brown
Capt. Casey J. Moton
Capt. Stephen R. Tedford
Capt. Eric H. Verhage

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. Jeffrey T. Anderson
Capt. Stephen D. Barnett