

the VA, giving authority to supervisors at the VA. If someone was not taking care of our veterans, there was a faster path to review this person, evaluate this person, and, if they would not change their behavior in the workforce, to be able to release them.

That special authority was given to VA centers all across the country just a couple of years ago, and the VA centers have used that to dramatically change the face of the people taking care of our veterans. Across the country, multiple individuals who were not putting veterans first have now been removed from VA centers, including those in Oklahoma. People who are passionate about taking care of veterans were put in those spots.

Just 1 year ago this month, Congress, along with President Trump, prioritized veterans again by passing the MISSION Act. The MISSION Act takes the Choice Act from a couple of years ago to the next logical step. It gives veterans the ability to have streamlined access to community care programs. They can still choose to go to their veterans centers, and many veterans choose to do that. They want to go there. They like their physician and their nurses and the process they go through there. But some of them want to go to a physician in their community. Maybe their spouse or kids go to that same physician, or maybe it is a family physician whom their family has known for a long time. Instead of being required to head to a VA center, they have the option to get care in their own community.

Also, if they need a specialist and the veterans center doesn't have that specialist close to them, they can get access to the specialist in an area that is close to them.

I will never forget the day that I dropped by one of the veterans centers in Oklahoma. I dropped by on a Sunday. Quite frankly, I wanted to meet the veterans and knew that none of the administration would be there and that I could just talk to the folks in the hallway and there wouldn't be the pomp and circumstance of a Senator walking up and down the halls. So I got a chance to visit with the veterans and see how they were doing and how their care was going.

As I walked into one of the rooms and introduced myself and asked a veteran how his care was going, he said: My care is going great. My doctors are terrific.

I said: Is this your first time in a veterans center?

He said: No. I have been in one before, but it wasn't here; it was in Seattle.

I said: Did you live in Seattle?

His response was: No, I didn't live in Seattle. I live here in Oklahoma, but I needed a certain type of cancer care, and the VA said that to get that specialty cancer care, I had to go to Seattle, to that veterans center, to get it.

My next question was obvious: Did your family get to go?

He hesitated, and then he said: No. I was in cancer treatment for 6 weeks by myself because the VA wouldn't cover my family to go there.

So a veteran who served us, who had to be away from his family, in service, multiple times then had to be away from his family again when he had cancer treatment. Why in the world would we do that when in Oklahoma, we have the Stephenson Cancer Center? One of the top cancer hospitals in the country is right in Oklahoma City. We have great cancer care in Tulsa. We have some phenomenal facilities that could have taken care of that veteran, and his family could have participated with him so he would not have been separated at one of the most traumatic moments of his life. Guess what. With the passage of the MISSION Act, that will never happen again. Specialty care like that can be done locally. When there is a great specialist nearby, they can get to that specialist nearby.

The MISSION Act really is a sea change in how we make sure the promise to our veterans is being maintained. It is not about putting all veterans in all cases of all care in a veterans center and saying: That is where everybody has to go. It is going back to the veteran and saying: What would you prefer? What is your preference? What is best for your treatment?

What is best for their treatment may not be the VA center there; it may be a highly skilled, highly prepared, quality set of doctors in a nearby specialty center for diabetes or cancer. This allows them to do that.

I do commend our veteran care centers in Oklahoma. There are some great leaders there who are working very hard. With the transition in personnel that has occurred in the last couple of years and the hard decisions that have been made, they have put in some really top-notch folks. I am proud they are in my State and in the way they are taking care of our veterans.

As we implement the MISSION Act in the days ahead, my hope is that we continue to give veterans the opportunity to make choices about their own care, that we continue to achieve stronger skill sets in the areas of care needed for our veterans, and that VA centers will be places where the highest quality of care will be given with regard to veteran-specific issues. So when a specialist is needed and maybe that specialist is not available at the veterans care center, veterans will still be able to get the best care they possibly can.

I look forward to the regulations continuing to be rolled out, as they are rolling out right now. Most of all, I look forward to looking our veterans in the face when asking "Are you getting the care you need?" and hearing their answer of "yes." That is what I look forward to.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in colloquy with my Senate colleague.

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

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I am here today to discuss an issue that is very important to Montanans, folks across the Nation, and many of my colleagues here in the Senate, and that is the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, commonly known as TANF. That is our Nation's cash-assistance and services program for low-income households with children.

I am joined today by my esteemed colleague and my friend, the Senator from Iowa, Mr. GRASSLEY. I have the privilege of serving on the Senate Finance Committee, chaired by Senator GRASSLEY, which has jurisdiction over TANF. Chairman GRASSLEY, like me, knows how important it is to ensure that this program is working as intended and that it is helping families move into jobs and toward self-sufficiency. Of course, it was Chairman GRASSLEY who helped bring about the last significant reform to TANF in 2006. I am glad he is leading the committee as we try to pass meaningful reforms again this year.

We are here today because we cannot ignore that Congress is about to do a straight continuation of funding of TANF for the 39th consecutive time despite the fact that this program needs reform.

TANF, created with bipartisan support in 1996, was a huge success for the American people. Let me say that again—with bipartisan support. After TANF became law, welfare caseloads plummeted, child poverty declined, and employment among low-income parents actually went up. TANF recognized that finding and maintaining a job is the most effective way for families to go from government-dependency to self-sufficiency.

However, more than 20 years after these historic 1996 reforms, Congress has neglected to act on the loopholes that hold States accountable for work requirements. In fact, today, very few States, including my home State of Montana, are meeting the work participation rate that is required by the law. The law calls for 50 percent of welfare enrollees to be engaged in work, but in Montana, they are only reaching one-third of that.

Many States are also using TANF dollars for purposes unrelated to work. States need to be providing families with the support they need, and that is why I am taking action. That is why I introduced legislation earlier this year—the Jobs and Opportunity with Benefits and Services Act, better

known as the JOBS Act—to reauthorize and modernize the TANF Program.

The JOBS Act would help our low-income families find work and have every opportunity to climb the economic ladder. It would require State caseworkers to engage with jobseekers to help them not only find a job but then to keep that job.

My legislation takes into consideration all aspects of a person's life, including mental health, drug addiction, and alcohol addiction. It also increases resources for childcare to refocus dollars back to supporting work.

Congress should be working to help families thrive in this growing economy. In fact, right now in the United States, there are 7.6 million new job openings. In fact, right now in the United States, job openings outnumber the jobseekers. As employers are looking to hire, we need to close the jobs gap and ensure that the Americans who need them most are filling them. This is an opportunity for mobility—to step toward the American dream.

Chairman GRASSLEY, would you agree with me that TANF is no longer meeting its welfare-to-work potential, and would you commit to working side by side with me and other supporters on modernizing TANF to bring about the reforms this program desperately needs?

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. The short answer to your question is yes, but I would like to give a longer answer, if I could, and give you my perspective of TANF.

TANF is an acronym for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, which was created almost 23 years ago to provide help to low-income families with children in order to promote work and to strengthen families.

The creation of TANF sent a very clear message: People receiving help from the taxpayers should be expected to work, to prepare for work, or to take steps to become more self-reliant in exchange for having the taxpayers help you through difficult times in your life. TANF also sent another message, this one to our 50 States: In exchange for this funding, States must help people find work, prepare for jobs, or do other things that will help families get back on their feet.

Besides Senator DAINES' mentioning Montana, I presume that of the 49 States, many are not meeting the requirements of TANF. Obviously, it does not make much sense for us to have standards if we don't enforce those standards.

There have been many proposals in recent years to improve the program, but, unfortunately, none have become law. That is why I am grateful to be here with Senator DAINES, who effectively represents Montana. I know Senator DAINES has been working on fixing problems with TANF and getting more people from welfare to work.

Other than these statements he is making here, this year, as evidence of his work, Senator DAINES introduced a bill with Ranking Member BRADY, of Texas, of the House Ways and Means Committee, that seeks to help more people find jobs and escape poverty.

Senator DAINES and I have agreed to work together, along with our other colleagues on the Finance Committee, to find ways to get something done on TANF as it has been too many years since any changes have been made to the program. I am grateful for his commitment to work with me to update this program, and I do look forward to working with the Senator and the other members of the Finance Committee to see what we can agree to, for reforms are needed more now than ever.

To my colleagues and people in the Senate who feel this way or to people outside the Senate who feel this way with regard to any talk of reforming TANF as being needlessly harmful to the people whom Senator DAINES and I want to help, I say what is really harmful to people is, if there are incentives to stay on government programs, because being on government programs guarantees a life of living in poverty.

What our goal should be for everything is to help people get out of poverty, and the way to get out of poverty is to be in the world of work if you have the capacity to work. Maybe some people who have certain physical conditions aren't able to work, and we have to help those people. Yet, for people who have the capability of improving themselves, they ought to be incentivized to improve themselves. Not only that, but it would work well for the needs of our labor market's requirements right now, and the Senator gave the statistics that there are more job openings than there are people for those jobs.

In the final analysis, if we want to get people in the workplace, we ought to have programs that incentivize people to go to work, and our reforming of TANF takes care of some of that. We also have to get rid of this cliff we have; that being, when people make \$1 more than what they get from the government programs, they lose everything. I can give you an example.

When I went to a factory in Northwest Iowa, I asked: Have you ever thought about encouraging people who are on welfare to come to work?

He said: We have one. He works until he makes about \$800. He quits for the rest of the month and then comes back at the beginning of the month because he knows he is going to lose all of those benefits.

It seems to me we ought to do away with that cliff and that we ought to encourage people to get jobs. If they make more money, they shouldn't lose everything all at once. Then, as they work their way up the ladder and improve themselves, maybe they will be off of the programs entirely.

In being a humanitarian, that is the way I see it. You are not a humani-

tarian if you give a person a life in poverty, which is what life is if you are just on government programs. In most cases, you have to be in poverty to qualify for the programs. Yet a few working people qualify for some. In helping to be humane to people, we provide a process for them to be in the world of work and improve themselves. So I look forward to working with the Senator.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I thank Senator GRASSLEY.

He has been a strong advocate for policies that uplift rural communities, and he gets to all of Iowa's 99 counties every year. I would bet Chairman GRASSLEY probably has a lot of stories to talk about as to what is going on because he is in touch with the folks back home who are in these rural communities. Montana is similar. We both come from States that have strong ag heritages, and we have a lot of rural communities. We need policies that will uplift these rural communities and, importantly, strengthen our families.

It is time we see some real change—to stop kicking the proverbial can down the road and OK these consecutive, short-term reauthorizations. That is something DC is pretty good at—short-term reauthorizations, like the 39 we have seen in the last decade with TANF. What we need are permanent reforms rather than these temporary extensions.

I thank Senator GRASSLEY for joining me today in this colloquy and for his commitment to getting something done.

The chairman is a "getter done" kind of leader, and he couldn't have said it any better than in his talking about removing families from being dependent to being independent. We have plenty of provisions here to make sure we take care of those families who, maybe, don't have a choice if there are addiction issues or if there are childcare problems. We have to make sure they will have the ability to get the help they need, but we want to move them into the workforce. With all of these jobs being available right now in this economy, we could solve two problems. That is why we need these TANF reforms.

I thank the Senator for joining me today and for his commitment to getting something done. I am positive TANF reform will lead to great success for people in Montana, for people in Iowa, as well as for people in the rest of the country.

I yield the floor.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF MATTHEW J. KACSMARYK

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, later this month our Nation will mark the 50th anniversary of the momentous uprising at the Stonewall Inn, an occasion that led to June being designated as Pride Month. From parades and celebrations to quiet remembrances, millions of Americans are reflecting on the progress made in the last 50 years for LGBTQ rights, but under the current administration, I fear some of that progress is at risk.

President Trump, who once claimed to be an ally of the LGBTQ community, has proven to be anything but that. His administration has pursued a series of administrative rule changes that seek to undermine the progress made by the LGBTQ community. That includes, at seemingly every opportunity, attempting to make life more difficult for transgender individuals, a community of people who already face daily discrimination.

The Trump administration has worked to erase the gender identities of Federal inmates; to restrict access to healthcare and allow homeless shelters to freely discriminate against LGBTQ individuals under the false guise of religious freedom; and to ban transgender servicemembers from our Armed Services, many of whom have served this country for years, including during times of war.

If discrimination by policy were not enough, President Trump also nominated an unapologetic anti-LGBTQ zealot for a lifetime appointment to the Federal bench, a nominee Senate Republicans are ready to confirm on the floor this week.

Matthew Kacsmaryk has a long history of espousing uninformed, offensive, and downright bigoted views of LGBTQ individuals. In 2016, he wrote that the existence of transgender identity is a “delusion” and that treating transgender patients in accordance with their gender identity is “radicalism.” He has repeatedly disparaged the LGBTQ rights movement and described efforts to roll back progress as a “Long War Ahead.” He has argued that discrimination against LGBTQ persons should be legal in employment, public accommodations, and healthcare. He has opposed equality in every possible arena, including anti-discrimination provisions in reauthorizations of the Violence Against Women Act and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Trafficking and Prevention Act, two pieces of legislation that I authored and care about deeply, legislation that attempts to defend the most vulnerable in our society.

No one can credibly claim that an LGBTQ individual, seeking nothing more than equality under the law, would receive a fair hearing from a Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, a man who considers himself a warrior in the effort to roll back LGBTQ rights. He is simply unfit to serve as a judge. The fact that Senate Republicans would consider the nomination of Matthew

Kacsmaryk during Pride Month adds additional insult to the LGBTQ community, which rightly speaks with a single voice in opposition to this nominee.

Protecting LGBTQ rights need not be a partisan effort. Senator Ted Kennedy and I worked with Republican partners to pass the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act into law, which ensures that hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity are federally recognized and prosecuted. I also worked with Senator CRAPO when we authored the landmark reauthorization and expansion of the Violence Against Women Act in 2013, which expanded protections for LGBTQ victims. The Senate has an opportunity to come together again in enacting much-needed reforms by passing the Equality Act.

A most basic duty of government is to protect its citizens. By allowing President Trump to repeatedly attack the LGBTQ community without taking action or speaking out, the Senate is failing in our duty. American citizens will suffer greatly from discriminatory policies and judges with hostility toward the LGBTQ community. People at their most desperate will be refused medical care and turned away from shelters. Soldiers will be forced to hide who they are or risk being discharged and prevented from serving the country they love. Inmates will be housed with people of a different gender, opening the door to abuse.

If the President is able to sanction overt discrimination against marginalized members of society with impunity, the words “all men are created equal” have little meaning. I implore each member of this body to stand up for the rights of all our LGBTQ constituents and friends, not just during Pride Month, but every month. I, for one, will stand with them.

NOMINATION OF ALLEN COTHREL WINSOR

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, Judge Allen Winsor has honorably served the State of Florida for several years, and I proudly support his confirmation as a district judge for the Northern District of Florida today. He has demonstrated a keen legal acumen and adherence to the rule of law, both in his prior capacity as the solicitor general in the Office of the Florida Attorney General and in his present role as an appellate judge on Florida’s First District Court of Appeal. His service on the appellate bench in Florida has consistently reflected his respect for the separation of powers and devotion to the proper function of the judiciary in our democratic system. As Governor of Florida, I had the distinct honor to appoint him to the First District Court of Appeal in 2016, and I am proud to support his confirmation to the Federal bench, where he will continue to serve our State and Nation well.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the votes following the first vote in this series be 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kacsmaryk nomination?

Mr. TESTER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 172 Ex.]

YEAS—52

Alexander	Gardner	Portman
Barrasso	Graham	Risch
Blackburn	Grassley	Roberts
Blunt	Hawley	Romney
Boozman	Hoeven	Rounds
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Burr	Inhofe	Sasse
Capito	Isakson	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Shelby
Cotton	Lankford	Sullivan
Cramer	Lee	Thune
Crapo	McConnell	Tillis
Cruz	McSally	Toomey
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Enzi	Murkowski	Young
Ernst	Paul	
Fischer	Perdue	

NAYS—46

Baldwin	Heinrich	Sanders
Bennet	Hirono	Schatz
Blumenthal	Jones	Schumer
Brown	Kaine	Shaheen
Cantwell	King	Sinema
Cardin	Klobuchar	Smith
Carper	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Manchin	Tester
Collins	Markey	Udall
Coons	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warren
Durbin	Murray	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Peters	Wyden
Harris	Reed	
Hassan	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—2

Booker	Gillibrand
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The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next nomination.

The senior assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Allen Cothrel Winsor, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Florida.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Winsor nomination?

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The senior assistant bill clerk called the roll.