



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2019

No. 146

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Holy God, Your goodness extends to all generations. Thank You that You can be found by all who truly seek You. You are our God, and we trust Your love, wisdom, and power.

Lord, guide our Senators to protect our goodly heritage of freedom, using them to defend our Constitution from all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Please, God, hear our fervent prayers, for You are our refuge and strength.

Cause us to live now as we shall wish we had done when our time comes to die.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 90 seconds.

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

CENTRAL COLLEGE TUITION REDUCTION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I have two points I would like to make. I have three bills designed to help students better understand the actual cost of college because it is kind of a complicated thing to determine because there is not enough transparency.

Colleges tend to think that having a high tuition is a reflection of quality, which just means that they all have to offer more scholarships. Between that and the complexity of Federal student aid, price shopping for college is very difficult and some people might think impossible. That is why I was glad to learn that one of Iowa's well-respected private colleges, Central College in Pella, IA, has lowered its tuition from \$38,600 a year to \$18,600 to better reflect the actual cost. Yes, that is right—they reduced their college tuition by \$20,000 a year. Maybe Pella Central College will start a trend.

REMEMBERING CHUCK GEERTZ

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, on another point, Iowans, and particularly veterans, mourn the loss of Chuck Geertz of Muscatine. Sergeant First Class Geertz was an Active-Duty servicemember for 23 years but continued to serve his Nation after his retirement in 2009, and this is how he did it: through establishing an organization in 2008 called Healing at English River Outfitters or, as he established the acronym, HERO. That organization does great good. It provides veterans and their families with relaxing outdoor activities for physical and mental healing.

Chuck is remembered for his caring spirit and dedication to his community and, most important, his fellow veterans. While he will be missed, his legacy of community service will continue.

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michelle Bowman, of Kansas, to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of fourteen years from February 1, 2020. (Reappointment)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, it was a good August. While I head back to South Dakota almost every weekend, August gives me the chance to spend multiple uninterrupted weeks back home visiting with South Dakotans and traveling to the far corners of the State.

August is also fair season in South Dakota, and there is nothing better than a South Dakota fair. This year I got to attend the South Dakota State Fair, the Brown County Fair, the Sioux Empire Fair, the Turner County Fair, and the McCook County Fair, to name a few on the list. As usual, I had a great time at all of them. Of course, the people are the best part of the fair, although I have to say that the fair food is not far behind. I am still enjoying at this late date the Tubby Burger

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S5453

that I had at the Brown County Fair, and I will tell you that they don't have burgers like that here in Washington, DC.

Agriculture is the lifeblood of South Dakota, and, as always, a lot of my conversations over August were centered on agriculture. Farmers and ranchers have had a very rough few years, and addressing the needs of our agriculture community is one of my top priorities in Congress.

One big concern for our producers is ethanol and biodiesel. While we received some good news this year with the approval of year-round E15 sales, the ethanol industry is still facing significant challenges owing to the excess of small refinery waivers that have been issued—an issue we continue to try to address.

Perhaps the biggest concern for our farmers right now is trade. Multiple protracted trade disputes have exacerbated an already struggling ag economy and have left farmers and ranchers unsure how markets are going to be going forward.

While ranchers received some good news in August with the announcement that the administration has reached a deal to increase U.S. beef sales to Europe, that is just a tiny fraction of what we need to be doing trade-wise. Each time I speak with the President and his administration, I tell them what South Dakota farmers have told me: We need to conclude negotiations on the various trade deals we are working on as soon as possible to open new markets and to expand existing ones and to give agricultural producers certainty about what the playing field is going to look like going forward.

One of my priorities right now is pushing for passage of the United States-Mexico-Canada free-trade agreement. The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement will preserve farmers' access to two of our Nation's most significant agricultural export markets—Canada and Mexico—and substantially expand market access for U.S. dairy products in Canada. Negotiations on this agreement have already been concluded. We need Democrats in the House to indicate their willingness to take it up and pass it.

August is always a great time to share with South Dakotans what I am working on in Washington and to get their feedback, which is why I am glad I had the opportunity to host several townhall meetings across the State, toured numerous local businesses, and visited nearly every corner of South Dakota.

As South Dakotans know, I am a longtime member of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. I served as chairman of the committee in the last Congress, and I currently chair the Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet. This has given me the chance to address a number of issues facing Americans and South Dakotans, from the

frustration of illegal robocalls to the data privacy concerns we all face in the internet age. It has also given me the chance to focus on digital issues that affect rural States like South Dakota, particularly the lack of high-speed internet access in rural areas.

To residents of large cities, being without access to high-speed internet is unthinkable, but for families in rural areas, which lack the telecommunications infrastructure of cities and suburbs, even basic internet access can sometimes be a struggle. Broadband access is frequently just a dream, and that has real consequences for these Americans.

It is not just a matter of being able to stream Netflix without interruption. In our digital economy, a lack of reliable, high-speed internet access means losing out on opportunities to grow your business, it means fewer educational opportunities, and it means fewer healthcare resources in areas that already lack easy access to specialty care services. Telehealth promises to reduce some of the geographic barriers to care for individuals in rural areas, but it depends largely on high-speed internet access. Then there is the rapidly developing field of precision agriculture. Precision agriculture, which uses tools like robotics and remote monitoring to help farmers manage their fields, promises to help farmers substantially increase their yields while reducing their costs. But, once again, it depends on reliable access to high-speed internet.

That is why I have made this issue such a priority. Nationwide, the digital divide is shrinking, as more and more Americans gain access to broadband. In South Dakota, we are ahead of the curb, thanks to people like Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken, who has worked aggressively to remove barriers to telecommunications investment in cities like Sioux Falls. I was very encouraged by the Federal Communications Commission's recent announcement that it will invest \$705 million over the next decade to bring broadband to rural areas in South Dakota that currently go without.

There is more work to be done, and I am committed to pushing this issue until reliable broadband access is standard in rural America. During the last week of the August break, I brought the Commerce Committee to Sioux Falls to conduct a field hearing on rural broadband. We brought an FCC Commissioner with us so that he could hear directly from South Dakotans who are on the frontlines of rural broadband expansion and leading the innovations that come along with it. It was a great hearing, and I am very encouraged by the progress we are making on this issue. I look forward to doing more work on this issue in the coming months.

I am energized by the time that I spent with South Dakotans during the August break, and I am looking forward to continuing to fight for South

Dakota's priorities here in Washington this fall.

TRIBUTE TO BRENDON PLACK

Madam President, before I close, I want to take a minute to recognize one of the people who has been instrumental in helping me serve South Dakotans throughout my time in the Senate.

This week, my whip office chief of staff, Brendon Plack, is leaving my office after 14 years. He has been with me during my entire time here in the Senate, from the very first month on the job, and it is difficult to imagine the office without him.

He started out at the bottom, as the guy who had to drive me to evening events so that I could squeeze in a little more work or a few more phone calls to South Dakota on the way. But he was always cheerful about it, and, even better, he drove well and never ran out of gas. It may not sound like a big deal, but having been subsequently stranded on the way to an event after running out of gas, I appreciate, as always, Brendon's preparedness.

Brendon soon moved up to legislative correspondent, then to legislative assistant, and then up from there to policy director, legislative director, staff director, and chief of staff. He has been an indispensable part of my team.

No job has ever been too big for Brendon, no task too hard. It doesn't matter how long the hours get. He is always willing to put in the work that needs to be done, and he stays cheerful through it all, lifting everyone else up with him.

He is a natural leader who is not only exceptionally talented himself but is great at spotting talent in others. He helped me to put together an outstanding team for the whip office and has helped me to maintain an outstanding team in my personal office.

In politics, as we all know, you meet people who are great at the nuts and bolts of policy and know every detail of an issue, and you meet people who aren't as focused on the details but have an ability to see the big picture and how what we are doing fits into our larger goals. You don't always meet people who can do both, but Brendon has always been able to get into the nuts and bolts of a policy and at the same time see the bigger picture.

One of the things I have appreciated most about Brendon is the fact that no matter what we are doing, South Dakota is at the forefront of his mind. As a native of Madison, SD, and the son of a farmer, Brendon has a keen insight into South Dakotans' priorities. Whether it is tax reform or energy legislation or agriculture, Brendon is always thinking about how we can serve South Dakota on the national stage. He has played a key role in so many of the things I have been able to get done for South Dakota here in Washington.

Now, I have described a pretty outstanding individual, but Brendon is not without his flaws. He is a longtime Vikings fan. Over the past 14 years, I

have tried hard to convince him that he should be rooting for the Green Bay Packers, but so far I haven't gotten anywhere.

Fortunately, our shared appreciation for the tuba has helped us to get over our major disagreements on football. Both Brendon and I are tuba players from way back, although I think he is a little more accomplished at the tuba than I am. I never made it beyond the high school marching band. Brendon went on to Augustana University in South Dakota on a music scholarship and played in the concert band. I just learned that he actually had lost his tuba scholarship—if you can believe this—to dedicate time to my first campaign.

As I said earlier, it is hard to think of my office without Brendon. He will be deeply missed, but I look forward to watching him excel in all his future endeavors. I know that he may enjoy having a little bit more time to spend with his wife Lindsay and his little ones, Timmy and Katie Lou. As we all know, days on the Hill can be very long.

If you ask Brendon how he got into politics, he will tell you about the meeting he attended in college where I was the guest speaker. That meeting, Brendon says, got him interested in politics for the first time. Shortly after, he applied to work on my first Senate campaign, and the rest, as they say, is history.

To hear Brendon tell it, attending that meeting was a lucky day for him, but I know it was an even luckier day for me and for the people of South Dakota.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, there are two possible paths when it comes to the appropriations process in Congress. There is a bipartisan path, where both parties work together in good faith to pass all 12 appropriations bills. Then there is the partisan path, where one party breaks faith with the other, and we end up traveling down a road of brinksmanship. Continuing resolutions become the order of the day, and the risk of a government shutdown increases.

We all know the bipartisan path is far preferable. It both avoids the possibility of another damaging government shutdown, and when we legislate the appropriations bills, we can intelligently allocate our resources for the

future. Continuing resolutions, on the other hand, are blunt objects that simply recycle last year's priorities. It hurts our military; it hurts the middle class; and it hurts the American people.

We are at an important crossroads between those two passes right now. After successfully negotiating the broad outlines of a budget deal earlier this year, we must now agree on the allocations to the 12 appropriations subcommittees. These are known as the 302(b) allocations. This process was completely bipartisan in 2018; these allocations passed the Appropriations Committee unanimously 31 to 0.

This year, the Republican majority, without consulting with Democrats, has proposed taking away \$12 billion from urgent domestic priorities and from urgent military priorities and wasting it—wasting it on President Trump's ineffective and expensive border wall. This is the very wall President Trump promised over and over again that Mexico would pay for when he ran for office and garnered support for it from his constituency.

No Republican—certainly not the Republican leader who knows this place well—could seriously believe Democrats would agree to that: \$12 billion for the wall, stolen from healthcare programs to fight opioid addiction and encourage cancer research, stolen from military families? No Republican could expect Democrats to support that, nor should they. It is terrible policy.

This morning, in the appropriations markup, every single Republican on the committee, including Leader MCCONNELL, voted to move forward on this idea. Republican Senators who oppose the President's emergency declaration voted for it; Republican Senators whose States would lose tens of millions of dollars in military funding voted for it. This is the clearest indication yet that Republicans may well be abandoning a bipartisan appropriations process. They would do so at their peril, as well as the peril of the Nation.

Republicans have started off here on the wrong foot, repeating the exact same mistakes they made at the end of 2018, which resulted in the longest government shutdown in American history—a shutdown that President Trump and Republicans rightly shouldered the blame for.

There is only one bit of good news in this maneuver. There is still time for Republicans to reverse course. The Republican majority should sit down with Democrats on the committee and start over on the 302(b) allocations, figure out an order to bring each bill to the floor, and get a bipartisan process back on track. That is how we Democrats want to do it. That is how we have always gotten appropriations bills done. No one wants to resort to a continuing resolution or, God forbid, another Republican, Donald Trump-inspired government shutdown, but it takes two to tango.

My Republican colleagues must know that what happens in the next few days

and weeks will determine whether we can proceed with a bipartisan appropriations process this fall or not.

I urge Leader MCCONNELL and every single Republican to reverse course—it is certainly not too late—and work with us and get it done. I spoke to Leader MCCONNELL yesterday right here in the well and suggested just that. He seemed open to it. Let's hope our request is heard.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Mr. President, on guns, yesterday, in an open letter to the Senate, the leaders of 145 companies—some of the most recognizable in our country—added their voices to the millions of Americans who want action on gun violence. Here are the words of these corporate leaders, hardly leftwing radicals: "Doing nothing about America's gun violence crisis is simply unacceptable . . . the Senate must follow the House's lead by passing bipartisan legislation that would update the background checks law, helping to keep guns out of the hands of people who shouldn't have them."

They are correct, and the people who shouldn't have them, almost no one thinks they should. Should felons have guns? Should spousal abusers have guns? Should people adjudicated mentally ill have guns? Yet the enormous loopholes in the law allow them to have guns. Forty percent of the guns sold in America now are sold without background checks because they are sold either online or at gun shows.

These corporate leaders are exactly right. They are not asking for anything radical. They are asking for something that 93 percent of the American people support.

When it comes to gun safety legislation, no policy is a better starting point than universal background checks. We are certainly open to debating the finer points of legislation with our Republican colleagues, but we certainly will not settle for anything less than meaningful action to address gun violence. We know meaningful action begins with closing the loopholes in our background check system so guns don't fall into the wrong hands in the first place.

After saying the issue of gun safety would be front and center when Congress returned, Leader MCCONNELL has given no indication of when the Senate might have a debate. Instead, he has suggested it is up to the White House—a mercurial, inconsistent White House—to determine what, if any, legislation reaches the floor. Meanwhile, after Republicans met with President Trump at the White House this week, a few said President Trump was liable to let Congress take the lead.

Well, Leader MCCONNELL, President Trump, Republican Senators, it is the old Abbott and Costello routine again. They are going like this: Congressional Republicans point at the White House, the White House points at congressional Republicans, and nothing gets done.

We know why nothing gets done. The public overwhelmingly—the vast majority of Americans, the vast majority of Republicans, the vast majority of gun owners, the majority of NRA members—want to close the loopholes, but the NRA has our Republican colleagues quaking in their boots, and they almost always bow down in obeisance to the NRA. The NRA says: Let us look at the legislation. Then it is so weakened, it virtually does nothing. That is not going to happen this time.

We need a vote on H.R. 8—modest, bipartisan, universal background check legislation. Our Republican colleagues should realize this game they are playing of Pennsylvania Avenue hot potato has become a shopworn strategy to delay and kick responsibility around so Republicans can avoid addressing the tough issue—the issue the American people sent us here to take on.

When Leader MCCONNELL says he is just going to do what President Trump wants—how unreliable. President Trump has been all over the lot on gun safety, with no real results in the 2½ years he has been in office. What lack of leadership. Let's just do it. The public wants us to do it.

What is different this time, my colleagues on the Republican side, is the public is so strongly on the side of what we want to do—closing the loopholes—that people will begin to pay a political price for not doing it. It used to be the equation was the other way, a small, dedicated core of advocates, quite extreme, on the pro-gun side had more weight than the vast majority of the American people who cared about this issue but didn't make it high up on their list. What has changed is this: It is one of the most important issues in the country. That is not I saying it; that is what the average citizen is saying.

The idea now of bowing down to the NRA, of not doing anything they don't want you to do is a political loser. I urge my Republican colleagues, for the sake of our country, for the sake of lives, to change their minds and behave differently.

The fact of the matter is this: The issue of gun violence is not going away, and the American people are not going to settle for half measures or half-baked solutions that the NRA crafts.

While we continue to press the White House to make its position public, we urge Leader MCCONNELL to do something very simple: Let us debate H.R. 8, the bipartisan, House-passed universal background checks bill on the floor ASAP.

CHINA

Mr. President, on China, a report in the Wall Street Journal this morning describes how China will seek to narrow the scope of ongoing negotiations with the United States, hoping to focus on trade alone, leaving national security issues for a separate conversation. Of course, in many cases, these two issues are intertwined and indissoluble. Of course, China and the United States

will invariably disagree about which issue is a trade issue and which issue is a national security issue.

Regardless, this transparent attempt by China to dodge a conversation about its predatory actions against American companies should not stand. China has stolen an entire generation of innovation from the United States. Of course they don't want to talk about this topic, and of course they want to defer this conversation to a day in the future that will never come.

Make no mistake about it, what the Chinese are doing is another effort to protect Huawei and similarly large Chinese corporations from further action in the United States. They don't let our best and biggest corporations sell goods in China. Why should we let them sell goods here, particularly when there is a national security risk as there is in Huawei? My late father-in-law, a New York City cabdriver, used colorful language. He said: Do you know what? When it comes to China, we are not Uncle Sam; we are Uncle Sack. Let's stop that already.

President Trump has shown some strength in this issue, but then he also often backs off. We have to be tough on Huawei—very tough on Huawei. That is the best way to teach China that they can't sell whatever they want here in America and not let us sell in China.

I have a concise and pointed request to the White House this morning: Tell China to forget about it. Don't let China exclude our Nation's security and Huawei from the negotiations.

Let me remind President Trump and his advisors that over the past several years, China has endeavored to keep our blue-chip technology companies out of its markets. When it does allow American companies access, it makes the transfer of proprietary intellectual property and technology to Chinese companies a precondition. When American companies don't play by their rules, Chinese companies steal the technology.

President Trump, you have been tougher on China than President Bush or Obama. I give you some credit for that, but it will all come to naught unless we actually take action. Don't let Huawei sell here. Don't let Huawei get the components made in America they need to continue to threaten both our economic and national security.

If China keeps American companies out, we should keep important Chinese companies out, particularly those like Huawei, until China relents. They will if we stay strong and if we stay tough.

President Trump, stay strong on China and on Huawei.

E-CIGARETTES

Mr. President, finally, on some praise for the Trump administration, I don't do it that often, but when it is due it is due. Yesterday, the Federal Drug Administration announced that it plans to pull most flavored e-cigarettes from the market. I have been concerned about the possible danger of e-cigarettes for a long time. I have been one

of the first to bring attention to the fact that the e-cigarette manufacturers aim at kids with both flavors and advertising. I have called for greater scrutiny, asked companies to recall brands of e-cigarettes where the parts are exploding, and have particularly focused on getting the FDA to ban e-cigarettes with flavors that are designed to appeal to teenagers and young kids.

I had several conversations and meetings with FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb about this issue. In fact, I brought him some kids from high school in Westchester who said that e-cigarettes were hurting their school and that so many kids were involved. I think it made a good impression—a strong impression—on former Commissioner Scott Gottlieb.

We take wide-ranging steps to prevent tobacco companies from targeting underage children in their markets but so far have done little to prevent e-cigarettes from executing basically the same strategy. It is past time the FDA moved to take these kid-friendly products off the shelves, and I commend the FDA's announcement that it plans to take action.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I appreciate what the Democratic leader just said about the flavored e-cigarettes, and I, too, commended the Trump administration yesterday for taking this action. It is a big deal in our high schools in Ohio and in other venues as well, and this will help to keep a lot of young people from engaging in this, which is bad for their health. Certainly, just like cigarette smoke, it also leads to addictions. I commend him for that.

The Democratic leader also talked about the fact that President Trump has been tougher on China than any previous President in modern times, certainly, and that is also true. Let's all hope the Chinese Government comes to the table in the next few weeks, as they get back to their discussions, ready to actually address some of these issues, particularly, the issue of their subsidies, which are contrary to our laws, but also the international rules, the technology transfer, and the taking of our intellectual property. These are changes in the structure of our trade relationship that are required for us to get to that level playing field that all of us should want.

I also agree about the notion that we should have more reciprocity. If they are keeping our stuff out, we should be able to respond in kind. Ultimately, we all want a resolution to this issue. We want the tariffs to be eliminated, but we want to do it on a basis where there is actually fair trade between our two countries.

With regard to the appropriations process, I, too, am hopeful we can get something done here on a bipartisan basis. The Democratic leader suggested

we might end up with a government shutdown. We should never end up with a government shutdown. It is terrible policy. It hurts government workers. It is bad for taxpayers.

We will be issuing a report from the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations tomorrow in this regard to show how the last three government shutdowns have resulted in tremendous pain, not just to those who get furloughed and those who work without pay but also to the taxpayer, and they are fairly inefficient. Let's not even talk about a government shutdown. Why are we going down this road?

OHIO

Mr. President, in the Senate, this is the first week back in session after what is called the August work period. Today, I want to talk a little bit about my travels around the State of Ohio over the August district work period and talk about what I learned that can help inform us here as to what we can do better in the Congress to help on issues that are important to people I represent in Ohio.

One that was striking for me, and it has been for the last several years, is workforce needs. There aren't enough workers to fill the jobs that are out there. What a great opportunity it is for people to come in out of the shadows and get to work, but also what a necessity it is now for our economy to have these workers. I learned a lot about that and heard a lot about that.

The changing drug crisis. We in Ohio have been hit hard with the opioid crisis, but it is evolving, as always. There is fentanyl, which is a synthetic form of opioids, but now crystal meth is much more powerful and cheaper than ever and is coming in from Mexico, and we need to be responsive to that change.

Challenges in Ag country. Our farmers are hurting. Low prices the last few years have been compounded by terrible weather this year. It was the worst planting in my memory in Ohio. A lot of crops didn't get in at all. Of those that did, about half of them are not in good shape. This is tough on our farmers.

Ways to do a better job in protecting Lake Erie. This is a huge issue for us in Ohio. It is our No. 1 tourist attraction, and it is an incredible source of income in jobs. We have about a \$6 billion fishing industry now in the Great Lakes. The most important lake of all is Lake Erie. As an example, several million people get their drinking water from Lake Erie. I learned a lot about that over the break.

Then, also, there is the importance of our military having the support they need. I went to our military bases around the State and learned about what we can do to help them more, and also I got the opportunity to visit two of our NASA centers in Ohio. One of the 10 NASA research centers is in Cleveland, OH, NASA Glenn. There is Plum Brook Station, where we test equipment heading to the Moon soon.

That was very helpful to understand better about how we can be providing steady funding in the Congress so that we can indeed fulfill our missions that we have always had here in this country, which is to push beyond the bounds and, in this case, to go back to the Moon and have the first woman on the Moon and, then, eventually, to go to Mars and the benefits of that.

It was a busy month. I traveled to 39 different counties in Ohio over the last several weeks and more than 4,000 miles in my pickup truck, which now has over 180,000 miles on it, traveling around our State and to 75 different events.

When I began my second term representing Ohio in 2017, I made it a goal of mine to visit all 88 counties in Ohio during this term. I am happy to report that just during August we achieved that goal. A few years early, we hit all 88 counties. We will continue to go around our State and to see people in every part of our State, hear them out, and, again, to know what the best thing is to do in Congress to be able to help them and their families and to help our State.

I also traveled by train and by ferry in Lake Erie, by bike on charity bike rides, and even by kayak on the Cuyahoga River, to meet with constituents about how Washington can be a better partner for them and their families. I met with a lot of small businesses, and I talked to them about how they are doing. The tax reform and the regulatory relief has really helped, and this is why we have a stronger economy now than anybody projected. It is why we have more jobs being created. It is why we have wages going up for the first time in a decade in Ohio.

Last month, we actually had nationally wage increases of 3.5 percent year to year, well above inflation. That is a welcomed change. Really, in Ohio, after about a decade and half of flat wages and not keeping up with inflation and people feeling like they are working hard and playing by the rules but they couldn't get ahead, now you finally see wages going up. The biggest increases are among lower income and middle-income workers. That is exactly what you want.

I am happy to report that, and I am happy to report that small business owners in Ohio are happy that it is working for them because they expanded their plants and their operations and they hired more people.

What I did hear consistently from employers at every level—and for that matter, from hospitals and nonprofits and from State and local government—is one thing: workforce. They don't have enough qualified workers to fill the jobs they have. Again, it is a great opportunity to bring people off the sidelines—people who are not applying for work, not looking for work—and to raise labor force participation, which economists say is relatively low, and bring them off the sidelines. We also need these people to be able to meet our economic needs.

If you go on OhioMeansJobs.com, this morning, in that website you will see about 150,000 jobs being advertised—150,000 open jobs. When you look at those jobs, a lot of them require skills. They are not the kind of skills you get from a college degree but the kind of skills you achieve somewhere between high school and college—things like welding, machining, coding, other IT jobs, techs for hospitals, and truckdrivers. These jobs are open right now in Ohio. Economists call these jobs “skilled jobs” but, again, they are the kind of jobs that you can get the skills from in short-term training programs.

I have been a big fan of improving those skills, and we have made some progress here. We started a caucus called the Career and Technical Caucus. I am the cochair and cofounder of that. It is to focus on these practical, hands-on, skills-training for jobs that can help us to be able to fill this need.

The openings we have in Ohio are also all around the country. I was pleased that recently the President signed my Educating Tomorrow's Workforce Act into law, which allows States and localities to use Perkins grant funding to establish these career and technical education academies at the high school level, but we need to do more.

One that would really help is if we could pass what is called the JOBS Act. It is legislation I have introduced consistently with Senator TIM Kaine from Virginia. It is really very simple. It says we ought to be able to use Pell grants not just for college but also for these shorter term training programs. In fact, they are much more relevant to what we need right now.

Sadly, most people who get a Pell grant to go to college don't end up with a college degree. I support Pell grants in colleges and universities. It is an important way for lower income students to get access to education. But why not allow those same students to get a shorter term training program under their belt? Right now they can't afford it. If you want to get a welding degree to get an industry-recognized credential to become a welder in Ohio, you can get a job right away—a good-paying job with good benefits. Yet it is costly to go through that program. They are less than 15 weeks. So they don't qualify for Pell.

A student is told: You can go to college and get a history degree, but you can't get a welding certificate and use a Pell grant. That is just wrong. It is unfair. I heard the same thing again and again at visits I made to community colleges around Ohio over August and visits I made to career and technical schools around Ohio, which is why they want the JOBS Act, and they want it now because they know it will help them.

I heard from one student at a welding program at a CTE school who told me she wanted to get an advanced welding certificate so she could get a great job. She knows exactly what she wants to

do, but she can't afford it. This is an 18-year-old in her last year of high school. She is working three jobs right now, but she can't afford the cost. So she is probably going to take a Pell and go to college when she would prefer to take a Pell and get this advanced certificate that is internationally recognized so she can get a good welding job. Again, that is something we should pass here and do it soon.

The Higher Education Act may well be passed this year. It is a perfect vehicle for it. I want to thank Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, who has been supportive of this commonsense change to be able to get our young people and others the training they need to be able to access the jobs that are out there.

Elsewhere around the State, I did meet with our farmers in several counties. The heavy flooding has led to the worst planting season in our modern history in Ohio. We have helped a little bit because the Department of Agriculture, at our urging, has included Ohio in disaster declarations. So some of these farmers who have not been able to plant are getting low interest loans right now and eventually will get some grant money. That is good.

These farmers also want to have the access to more markets around the world because they know that is going to increase their prices and enable them to get back on their feet after these tough times with the weather.

They are particularly concerned about what is happening with regard to the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. Remember, we have this existing agreement called NAFTA, which is with Mexico and Canada, our two largest trading partners. For Ohio, they are by far our two largest trading partners. But right now, the NAFTA agreement is 25 years old, outdated, not keeping up with the times, and not opening up markets enough. So we have this new agreement that has been signed by Mexico and signed by Canada. We are ready to go with it, but it has to be confirmed in the U.S. Congress. Right now, unbelievably, it is being held up, even though our farmers desperately want it. You know who else wants it? Our workers, because it is going to help manufacturing.

The people who are involved in trade understand the importance of Canada and Mexico because they are our largest markets, and it is going to be so helpful for our country and for my State of Ohio if we can get it done. The International Trade Commission, which is an independent body, studied this and said: Yes, it is going to create over 150,000 new jobs in the auto industry. It is great for Michigan, Ohio, and other States. Again, all we have to do is have a vote here in the U.S. Congress to be able to confirm this, and we can put it in place. It will help our economy. It will help create more jobs. It will help create some certainty going forward. We need to get this done.

Many of the things in the agreement are things that Democrats have been

calling for for years—tougher labor standards that are enforceable, as an example. It actually has a minimum wage—40 to 45 percent of vehicles made under USMCA must be produced by workers earning an average of \$16 an hour. It has a 70-percent requirement to use North American steel. It has a number of things that the Democrats have called upon us to do for years.

If we don't pass USMCA, the alternative is the status quo, which is NAFTA. In effect, if you don't support USMCA, it must mean that you support the status quo, which is NAFTA, which, again, so many Democrats have been criticizing over the years. Let's get this done. The 25-year-old NAFTA is not the status quo that anybody should want when we have this better agreement in front of us.

Specifically, if the House of Representatives were to bring the bill to the floor, I believe they could pass it just because of the logic, the fact that this agreement is so much better than the status quo. Then, over here in the Senate, we would have no trouble passing it, in my view.

During my tour over the August break, I also spent time visiting with a lot of groups and organizations that are combating the drug epidemic that has gripped my State of Ohio and our country. As you know, we now have more people in Ohio dying from overdoses than from any other cause of death. It is unbelievable. In 2017, 72,000 people died of overdoses in this country, more than we lost in the entire Vietnam war, just in one year—72,000 Americans.

We have made some progress recently. We should be proud of that. Last year, for the first time in 8 years, we saw a reduction in overdose deaths. It is partly because Congress has stepped up—over \$4 billion in new funding for prevention, longer term treatment programs, recovery programs, and more Narcan for our first responders. This is important, but we also have to realize that the threat is evolving and changing.

One thing I learned when I was home and talking to groups all over the State about this issue is that, yes, the legislation we passed is helping. I got to see how it is helping and to see how my legislation, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, is being put to work in Ohio.

The new threat in Ohio is these new drugs that are coming in, particularly crystal meth. The crystal meth coming in from Mexico is more powerful and less expensive than ever. We used to have meth labs in Ohio. You may have had them in your communities as well. You probably will not hear much about meth labs anymore. Why? Because the stuff on the street is even more powerful than you can make in a meth lab, in someone's home, and it is less expensive.

In fact, the law enforcement folks in Ohio are telling me that the meth on the street in Ohio is less expensive

than marijuana, and it has a much more corrosive effect on our communities and a devastating impact on families and individuals, increasing crime. This is the psychostimulant, like cocaine, that is causing more aggressive crimes, in fact.

With regard to the opioid crisis, we need to keep our eye on the ball. We need to continue what we are doing. Congress deserves credit for expanding the treatment, longer term recovery programs, some of the prevention money, the use of Narcan, but at the same time, we have to be more flexible.

The legislation I have introduced—and I hope we will be able to pass—will provide more flexibility to our communities to take that money for opioids and use it for whatever the community needs to address substance abuse.

When I was home, I also heard a lot about Lake Erie, which is our treasure in Ohio. It is the No. 1 tourist attraction in the State. It is the place where Ohioans have come for generations and generations for recreation, for fishing, for swimming. Also, so many Ohioans depend on it for their drinking water.

There are several million Ohioans who require us to have clean drinking water out of Lake Erie, and those individuals are worried. Why? Because in Toledo a few years ago, we actually had a recommendation that we shut down the water system because of the toxic algal blooms that are in Lake Erie. This year was another tough year for the toxic algal blooms, cutting off fishing opportunities and swimming opportunities. We need to do more to address it.

Again, Congress has made progress in this area. We have passed legislation that is helping. We have added more money that is helping. My legislation to deal with harmful algal blooms is giving the Federal Government a bigger role. That is important.

Clearly, we need to do more, and one is to ensure that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Federal legislation, continues to be funded. That is the fight we are having now in the appropriations process. Senator STABENOW and I have introduced legislation to authorize that program going forward and to increase the funding slightly. Why? Because it is working. These are public-private partnerships all around the Great Lakes to deal with the harmful algal blooms, to deal with the pollution, and to deal with the invasive species coming in. It is one of those Federal programs that works well.

We also had the opportunity to go to all of our military bases around the State of Ohio and to go to our two NASA facilities. Again, I am so proud of the individuals in Ohio who are standing up for our troops in their own way—whether it is the Lima tank plant, where I got to visit individuals making our M1 Abrams tanks and our Stryker vehicles, or whether it is at NASA, where we are preparing for the next mission to the moon.

NASA Administrator James Bridenstine came with us to the Glenn

Research Center in Cleveland and the Plum Brook testing facility. We got to see how those scientists and engineers—the best in the world—are working to complete the Artemis Program. Again, this is an ambitious effort to put a woman on the moon and the next man on the moon within the next 5 years, laying the groundwork for our mission to Mars.

It was great to be home. It was great to have the opportunity to visit with folks all over the State of Ohio. We were busy, but it is also great now to have the opportunity to come back refreshed and to talk about how we can make a bigger difference for them here in the U.S. Congress with some of the legislative initiatives I have talked about today.

There is so much we can and should do this fall. I am eager to roll up my sleeves and have a productive session here, working on a bipartisan basis to get things done for the people I represent and for all Americans.

Thank you.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

VIETNAM HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I think people are surprised when they come to Texas and find out how diverse a State it really is. Not everybody there looks like me or pronounces their last name the same way.

In fact, we are a huge melting pot of people from all over the country and, literally, many from around the world who come to the State because we have a growing economy, creating jobs and opportunity. People can find work to provide for their family and achieve their dreams.

It shouldn't surprise anybody that Texas is increasingly diverse. We have benefited a lot from the variety of folks and cultures and ideas that have come around the world and planted roots in the Lone Star State.

When I ask folks if they know what the second most spoken language in Texas is, they say: Well, that is easy. It is Spanish.

I say: Well, that is right. Let me give you a harder one. What is the third most commonly spoken language in Texas?

After a couple of guesses, they are usually surprised when I say Vietnamese.

It is not in the overall numbers of Spanish or English, to be sure, but we have a vibrant Vietnamese community in Texas that was established after the fall of Saigon and the Vietnam war. Many of them immigrated to the Houston area or to the metroplex area.

Of course, they have faced many of the same struggles as those who have come to America throughout our country's history. In addition to adjusting to a new home, language, and culture, they have dealt with some ugly aspects of their new home: racism and bigotry.

From those challenges and from overcoming those challenges, they

have derived tremendous strength, demonstrated outstanding drive and a desire to succeed.

Our Vietnamese-American communities in Texas are growing and thriving, and they continue to play a very important role in our increasingly diverse State.

I had the chance to meet with a number of my Vietnamese-American constituents during the August break, and we talked about some of the issues that concern them the most.

Just last weekend, in fact, I visited Cali Saigon Mall in Garland, TX, for their annual children's festival. I participated in an on-stage discussion with a number of community leaders. Although the children seemed more interested in the tiger dance or musical performances and the colorful costumes, it was a great opportunity for me to hear from these folks firsthand. We had a serious discussion about the human rights climate in Vietnam, which has continued to decline.

The Vietnamese Government limits political freedom by denying its own citizens their right to vote in free and fair elections. It denies them the freedom of assembly and expression and due process rights—the sorts of basic rights we call human rights here in the United States.

Last year, one of my constituents, a young man named William Nguyen, was unjustly beaten and detained for participating in demonstrations in Ho Chi Minh City. We were fortunate enough to secure his release back home after the government convicted him on trumped-up charges. I was glad to welcome him back to the good old U.S. of A.

Sadly, the people who continue to live in Vietnam have to escape from a brutal Communist regime, which continues to disregard the most basic human rights, threaten religious freedom, and silence the press.

Vietnam remains one of the lowest ranked countries in the world when it comes to freedom of the press. In 2018, Reporters Without Borders ranked Vietnam 176th out of 180 countries worldwide.

It should come as no surprise that Vietnamese Americans who have lived under this type of rule—or who have family members who still do—don't take our freedoms here in America for granted. It is just the opposite. These immigrants are great patriots who fully appreciate the freedoms they enjoy here in America because they realize how close they came to seeing those same freedoms denied in their home country.

With them, I share their concerns about the rising interest here at home in failed ideas, like socialism, and will continue to dispel rumors that socialism can provide more than the free enterprise system, which has created the very prosperity that Vietnamese Americans and other immigrants enjoy here in the United States.

In addition to our efforts to strengthen our own democracy, we need to do

more to strengthen democracies around the world and to protect basic human rights. Earlier this year, I reintroduced the Vietnam Human Rights Sanctions Act to try to do just that. This bill would impose travel restrictions and other sanctions on Vietnamese nationals complicit in human rights abuses against their fellow citizens. These sanctions would not be lifted until the Vietnamese Government releases all political prisoners and stops the use of violence against peaceful demonstrators.

We simply can't avert our gaze and allow these practices to continue without any sort of accountability. I say the same for what is happening now in Hong Kong.

I appreciate the many Vietnamese Americans who have shared their experiences with me on this topic, and I will continue to advocate for a brighter future for the people of Vietnam.

TRIBUTE TO SANDY EDWARDS

Mr. President, on one other matter, I want to take a moment to recognize a member of my staff who is nearing her retirement—Sandy Edwards.

Sandy is the regional director in my Austin field office. She has been with me for nearly two decades—first, in my office when I was attorney general of Texas and now in the U.S. Senate, where she serves, as I said, as my central Texas regional director.

Everybody who knows Sandy knows she has the heart and spirit of a public servant. She works hard to make sure that every Texan who contacts my office feels appreciated, understood, and is happy with the support they receive.

She knows that our faces represent what people get for their tax dollars. With Sandy, central Texans have gotten some serious bang for their buck. Over the years, she has, of course, developed countless relationships with people and organizations that are working to improve our Texas communities in Central Texas.

I will never forget one year spending a December evening out in East Austin at an incredible nonprofit called the Community First! Village. We joined formerly homeless people for a Christmas tree lighting and spent a cold, rainy night with them rejoicing at what this organization and the good-hearted people who work there have helped them to achieve.

At one point, in 2012, Sandy had me biting down on a Starburst candy so students attending Girlstart Summer Camp could analyze my dental impression. I never got a report back of exactly how that turned out.

Sandy is not a fair-weather friend. She has also been by my side during some very difficult times. For example, in 2009, following the horrific shooting at Fort Hood, she was there as I fought to find words to provide even an ounce of comfort to the grieving post and the families there. We paid our respects to these American heroes and watched the ramp ceremony as their flag-draped caskets were loaded into a C-17 for their flight to Dover.

Then there was 2013 in West, TX. That is not the region. That is the name of the city. Following a massive fertilizer plant explosion, it tore through a tight-knit community and claimed the lives of 15 people, including most of the town's volunteer fire department. Sandy, of course, was on the ground, as she always is, helping to connect with the first responders and local officials, making sure they had the support we could provide from our office.

She was there during the Bastrop fires in 2011, the Wimberley flooding in 2015, and the deadly hot air balloon crash in Maxwell, TX, in 2016. Sandy has been a gracious helping hand during the tough times and an enthusiastic cheerleader during the good ones. I am sorry to lose such a devoted staffer and friend, and I know my team in Texas will miss her bighearted participation in our team effort.

I don't think it is really a coincidence that Sandy chose the month of September to retire because, of course, this is the start of her beloved Texas Longhorns' football season. I know she is looking forward to attending UT games this fall, along with her husband Stan and perhaps her son Kyle and his wife Brittney. I know for sure she will enjoy spending more time at her family's ranch in the Texas Hill Country.

I come to the Senate floor to publicly express my appreciation, as well as that of my entire staff and I would dare say every single Texan who ever met her, and to thank Sandy Edwards for the lives she has touched and made better. I say, thank you, Sandy, and I wish you a well-deserved next chapter in your life.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from Louisiana.

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, \$1 million a minute—not \$1 million an hour or a day or week, \$1 million a minute. That is how much we borrow every minute to operate the Federal Government. It is \$1.4 billion—that is nine zeros—a day. That is how much more we spend than we take in. Some people have said—I have heard Americans say this—that we spend money like a drunk sailor. That is not accurate because a drunk sailor stops when he runs out of money. We just borrow.

We don't just print this money. We issue Treasury notes and Treasury bonds and Treasury securities. We borrow it. Some Americans loan it to us. Some folks in other countries like Japan and China, they expect to be paid back, and we do have to pay them back. In a couple of years, we are going to be spending more in our budget on interest on our debt than we are spending on defense.

Now we are in the middle of putting together a budget for the American people. The first thing we had to do was agree on how much money we are going to spend. They call that the topline number, but that just means how much money we are going to spend

for the next 2 years. You will not be surprised to learn we are going to spend more.

I think it was a bad deal. I voted against it. Our agreement on what we are going to spend in the budget we are putting forward now, according to the CBO, is going to add to our \$22 trillion—that is 12 zeros—deficit. In fact, what we just agreed to, the additional spending, is going to add, according to our Congressional Budget Office, \$12 trillion over the next 10 years.

I voted against it. I lost. The majority rules. Now we are trying to put together a budget with all this extra money, and our challenge is or ought to be: How do we spend the money the American people are going to give us in an efficient way? I think every single Member of the Senate wants to do that.

I want to talk for a few minutes about an issue that is going to come up. It is going to come up through the subcommittee I chair. It has to do with elections, and it has to do with money.

Russia tried to interfere with our election. You can write that down and take it home to mama. It is true. They did it. They didn't change a single vote, but they did try to influence the way Americans did vote. To try to prevent that from happening again in 2018, this Congress gave our States \$380 million to shore up their election systems. They haven't spent all that yet.

This Congress also took other steps. The Senate has unanimously approved two bipartisan election security bills. I think they are both now pending in the House. We passed the Defending the Integrity of Voting Systems Act. That is going to make it a Federal crime to hack any voting system in a Federal election. We passed the Defending Elections Against Trolls from Enemy Regimes Act. We call that the DETER Act. It will bar people who interfere in our elections or attempt to do so from entering the United States. Our Department of Homeland Security, very able women and men, and our cyber security advisors there, smart people—they are helping our State and local officials, on a daily basis, guard against threats.

We had a classified briefing. By "we," I mean all Members of the Senate, Republicans and Democrats. "Classified" means it is in our room down in the basement where foreign agents cannot listen in. The FBI Director was there. The Director of National Intelligence was there. Most senior ranking members of our military were there, and the topic was: How did we do in 2018? We know the Russians and others took a run at us in 2016. They didn't succeed, but they tried. How did we do in 2018?

Let me tell you, our men and women at the FBI and in our military and in Homeland Security, they are on it. Our 2018 election went off without a hitch. I am not saying some foreign despots didn't try to influence how we voted, but they didn't change a single vote. Our people did a great job, and every

Senator, Democratic and Republican, in that room, in that classified setting—I can't tell you the details. I wish I could. If I could, you would be impressed. But everybody walked out of there and said: Man, we are on it. The 2018 elections went off without a hitch, and, by God, we are ready for 2020.

We didn't just do that. I am going to go back to what I just said. We gave our States \$380 million. They haven't even spent all of it yet, but there is going to be an effort to spend a whole bunch more to give it to the States. I don't know how much, but at least \$200 million, maybe \$400 million, maybe a billion. If I thought it was necessary, I would vote for it.

Some of my colleagues, in perfectly good faith, think the States need more money, even though they haven't spent what we gave them to begin with and even though all of our intelligence officials say we are ready for 2020. Some of my colleagues, in good faith, think they need more money, but some of my colleagues see this as a first step to nationalizing elections, and that is what worries me.

Do you know what makes our elections safest of all? You can't just hack one system. You have to hack 50. You have to hack 50 because the States run elections, and they do a pretty good job. They do a really good job.

There is an effort—not by all but by some—to get the Federal Government in charge of elections. Do you know how you do that? You don't just jump in and grab them. You sneak up on them. I will tell you how you sneak up on them. You start giving them money, and you get them addicted. You give them a little more money, and you get them addicted. Then, the next thing you know, the Feds are running the elections, and not for all but for some of my colleagues that is what this is about.

This country started out as a self-reliant, tax-averse Union of States. They were very skeptical of the Federal Government. Our original States and all those after them, they insisted on running their own elections, and it has worked. We don't need the Federal Government in charge of elections.

There are some of my colleagues coming this time—and, look, I am not impugning their integrity. They are entitled to their opinion because this is America, but I am entitled to mine. In the effort last year, we were able to beat it back. I am afraid some of my friends on this side of the aisle this time are having second thoughts. I am hearing all kinds of rumors. It is amazing what you can pick up around this place if you just walk around the floor and keep your mouth shut and your ears open. You hear all kinds of stuff.

I am here to say, if we do it, we are going to look back, when the Federal Government is running our elections and screwing them up, and say this is where it began. If you want to put the U.S. Federal Government in charge of your elections instead of the States, if

you think that is a swell idea, I want you to close your eyes for a minute and imagine living in a world designed by the post office because that is what you are going to get.

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

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

RETURN OF PAPERS REQUEST—S. 1790

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Secretary of the Senate be authorized to request from the House of Representatives the return of the papers to S. 1790 to provide for a correction. I further ask that if the House agrees to the Senate's request, upon receipt of the papers from the House in the Senate, notwithstanding passage of the bill, the amendment at the desk be agreed to and the papers be returned to the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Bowman nomination?

Mr. KENNEDY. 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent; the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS), and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea" and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 60, nays 31, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 280 Ex.]

YEAS—60

Barrasso	Boozman	Carper
Bennet	Braun	Cassidy
Blackburn	Burr	Collins
Blunt	Capito	Cornyn

Cotton	Isakson	Romney
Cramer	Johnson	Rounds
Crapo	Jones	Sasse
Cruz	Kaine	Scott (FL)
Daines	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Enzi	Lankford	Shaheen
Ernst	Lee	Shelby
Fischer	Manchin	Sinema
Gardner	McConnell	Sullivan
Graham	McSally	Tester
Grassley	Moran	Thune
Hassan	Murkowski	Tillis
Hawley	Perdue	Toomey
Hoeven	Peters	Warner
Hyde-Smith	Portman	Wicker
Inhofe	Risch	Young

NAYS—31

Baldwin	Heinrich	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Leahy	Smith
Cardin	Markey	Stabenow
Casey	Menendez	Udall
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murphy	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murray	Wyden
Feinstein	Paul	
Gillibrand	Reed	

NOT VOTING—9

Alexander	Harris	Rubio
Booker	Klobuchar	Sanders
Coons	Roberts	Warren

The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Jennifer D. Nordquist, of Virginia, to be United States Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of two years.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

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

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Thomas Peter Feddo, of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Investment Security. (New Position)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

END CHILD TRAFFICKING NOW ACT

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, this is not the first time I have come to the floor to discuss a situation that is on our Nation's southern border and the need that we as a country have for a stronger, more efficient immigration policy. I have made more than one trip to South Texas this year, and each time I have returned, I have found myself more motivated to cut through the noise, and to get something done.

What should be a practical policy discussion has, unfortunately, turned political, and very real problems have compounded into an unprecedented crisis.

Within these Halls, we have debates over asylum caps and visa requirements. They are indeed important issues, but recent reports on the explosion of human rights violations perpetrated by cartels, coyotes, and international gangs have added some much needed context to these debates.

By now, we have all heard how dangerous the journey to our southern border can be for those who are being brought forward by cartels, coyotes, and international gangs. Traffickers have really built a big business—a very big and profitable business—on moving drugs and desperate human cargo across the border. Sometimes these individuals make it, and sometimes the guides leave their charges to die—to die alone in the desert. Rumors of abuse, assault, and gang rape have manifested and been proven true. Border Patrol agents at most ports of entry administer pregnancy tests to girls as young as 12 years of age.

While we waste time arguing over talking points, monsters—absolute monsters—are dragging children into the crosshairs of an international crisis. While we debate the best way to amend our loose asylum laws, traffickers are finding ways to exploit those laws, using children to force their way back and forth across the border under the guise of parental legitimacy.

"Child recycling" is a crude term but an accurate term, and we define it as when a minor is used more than once by alien adults who are neither relatives nor legal guardians but pose as family members for the purposes of crossing the border. How despicable and how very selfish of them. Child-recycling isn't a myth, unfortunately. It is not an urban legend. It is a definite, well-defined, clear and present danger.

DHS has uncovered more than 5,500 fraudulent asylum claims since May of 2018. I want you to think about that number—5,500 fraudulent asylum claims since May of 2018. Customs and Border Patrol tells us that unaccompanied minors are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and that drug runners and sex predators are rolling the dice on these fraudulent asylum claims to move their products—which, bear in mind, are people and drugs—to move them more efficiently.

Earlier this year, Immigration and Customs Enforcement introduced a pilot program they believed would help determine how serious the child recycling problem is. They began administering DNA tests on all adults accompanied by minors who claimed a familial relationship but lacked the paperwork to prove this relationship. As a safeguard, all swabs were destroyed, and no genetic profiles were collected or stored. The purpose was solely to