

a simple matter of routine maintenance on equipment. If we would like the U.S. military of the future to remain the world's preeminent fighting force, then, the stakes are much higher. As Russia rattles its saber and develops weapons such as hypersonic cruise missiles and quiet submarines, we need to continue funding for research and development of our own cutting-edge capabilities.

We have to provide for the modernization of infrastructure and update defenses against cyber threats so that China's ever-bolder meddling in this domain cannot bring about the cyber hegemony it craves. We cannot turn our back on our interests and partners in the broader Middle East. In Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and beyond, we face ongoing terrorist threats. Iran's violent aggression certainly highlights the need for vigilance and for strength. All of this is needlessly more difficult if we don't fund the military's modernization and readiness. The stakes are too high for us to fail.

We cannot afford to abdicate our responsibility to deliver timely funding to the critical priorities of the Federal Government, least of all to the men and women in uniform who keep us safe. So I would urge each of my colleagues to engage in this process, honor our agreement that we made just 1 month ago—just a month ago—and keep us on track to deliver for our country.

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 John Rakolta, Jr., of Michigan, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the United Arab Emirates.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, as negotiations continue on a continuing resolution to keep the government open past next week, we should be laying the groundwork to process the 12 appropriations bills for fiscal year 2020.

In an ideal world, the Republicans on the Appropriations Committee would be negotiating in good faith with the Democrats on the Appropriations Committee to determine the allocations and the content of those bills, but the Republicans, unfortunately, have not chosen to do this. They are acting in a totally partisan way. The Republicans have chosen to back the President's demand for an additional \$12 billion in funding for his border wall, taken from other sources, including medical research, opioid treatment, and funding intended for our military, their families, and their kids. Mexico, oddly, isn't chipping in a penny.

This was all done totally on the Republican side with there having been no consultation of the Democrats and, certainly, no buy-in. So, of course, the Democrats oppose taking funds from Congress to use on the President's border wall that have been intended for our military. Everyone knows that. In fact, 12 Senate Republicans opposed the very same thing this year, but in typical Washington, blame-game fashion, Republican leader MITCH MCCONNELL has been accusing the Democrats of threatening to block military funding because we don't want to pass a bill that steals money from the military. That is right. The Democrats are the ones threatening not to vote for this bill because we oppose a Republican bill that would shortchange the military.

I have heard some howlers in my day, but that is pretty rich, what MCCONNELL is saying.

Leader MCCONNELL constantly talks about stunts. He doesn't like stunts because they won't be signed or passed into law. This is a stunt if I have ever seen one, that of putting this bill—\$12 billion more for the wall and with no buy-in by the Democrats—to a vote. It will lose. We know it will lose.

What is the point, Leader MCCONNELL? You say you don't like stunts. You say you don't want to bring bills to the floor that won't become law. Well, this one certainly won't.

The fact is the Republican leader knows well that the Democrats oppose taking funding away from our troops to use on the President's wall. He knows that Members of his own caucus oppose taking money out of their States to spend on the President's border wall. Some have been quite vocal; yet Leader MCCONNELL is moving forward with the bill all the same, knowing that it lacks votes.

For him to say the Democrats are the ones threatening to block military

funding when, in fact, we oppose a Republican bill that would shortchange the military is the height of double talk by the Republican leader.

Again, the Republican leader is fond of reminding the press that he doesn't like to engage in stunts—that the Senate is for making laws and is not a forum for political theater. Yet putting this bill on the floor of the Senate that everyone knows lacks the votes is the definition of a stunt.

Leader MCCONNELL—and I mean this with all due respect—it is time to negotiate. Both sides must sit down and have a serious negotiation—no stunts, no blame game. The Democrats want to work with our Republican colleagues, but we need a willing partner, and time is quickly running out to get a bipartisan appropriations process back on track.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Madam President, now, on guns, a week and a half after our return from the August work period, Senators from both sides of the aisle are still waiting to hear what the President proposes in order to combat the epidemic of gun violence. According to reports, the President's yet-to-be-released plan will likely not include universal background checks or even a significant expansion of background checks. If those reports are true, it will be a profound shame.

Without closing the loopholes in our background check system, most other gun safety measures, like emergency risk protection orders, would be severely compromised. Background checks must be the base, the foundation, of gun safety legislation. If background checks aren't included, we will still be allowing guns to fall into the wrong hands—those of convicted criminals, domestic abusers, the adjudicated mentally ill.

You can have one of these emergency risk protection orders issued to someone—let's say to Mr. John Smith. Yet, if we don't close these loopholes, John Smith, the next day, will be able to go online and get a new gun because there will be no background check, and the seller of the gun will have no way of knowing there will have been a protection order against him. Without having background checks, a lot of this other stuff isn't going to do the job. It isn't going to save the most lives that we can.

I hope the President thinks long and hard before releasing a proposal that falls short of making meaningful progress, particularly on background checks.

In the past, Republican Senators, Congressmen, and candidates promised action after mass shootings, only to have announced support for legislation that was specifically designed not to offend the NRA. We have seen that before.

This is a chance for the President to do something different and, frankly, something courageous. It would be a terrible shame if he were to squander that very much needed opportunity. If

whatever the President announces this week falls short of what the American people are demanding, the Democrats will continue to press the issue.

Later tonight, I will join several of my Democratic colleagues on the floor for an extended debate on the issue of gun violence. Many of my colleagues have seen their communities torn apart by gun violence—some by horrific mass shootings, others by a relentless, daily stream. Many of them have worked for years to put common-sense gun safety measures before the Senate. Tonight, the Democrats will hold a forum to bring those stories to the Senate floor—the stories of families who have been shattered by gun violence and the stories of our constituents who demand that we take action.

My Republican colleagues, I hope, will listen closely and, more importantly, will join the Democrats in working to pass meaningful legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I spent a lot of time talking to South Dakota farmers over the August break, and I can tell you that if there is one thing on farmers' minds right now, it is trade; it is markets; it is having a place to sell the things that we raise and grow. Farmers and ranchers have had a rough few years. Low commodity prices and low livestock prices, natural disasters, and protracted trade disputes have left our agricultural economy trailing behind our economy as a whole.

As farmers emphasized to me during August, one of the biggest things we can do to help our agricultural economy is to implement trade agreements that benefit American farmers and ranchers. The United States is currently involved in trade negotiations on multiple fronts—with the European Union, with China, with Japan, and with other Asian-Pacific countries.

Like many farmers and ranchers, I support the President's goal of addressing trade imbalances and securing more favorable conditions for American products abroad, but we need to conclude these agreements as soon as possible. The longer negotiations drag on, the tougher the situation for farmers, who face retaliatory tariffs as well as a lot of uncertainty about what markets are going to look like.

We have had some recent successes. In August, the administration announced a deal to increase U.S. beef sales to Europe. In May, the administration announced a deal with Japan to remove all remaining age restrictions on U.S. beef, giving American ranchers full access to the Japanese market for the first time in more than a decade. Yet that is just a tiny fraction of what needs to get done on the trade front when it comes to agriculture.

Every time I speak with the President and his administration, I empha-

size what South Dakota farmers have told me: We need to conclude negotiations on the various trade deals that we are working on, and we need to do it now. We need to open new markets, expand existing ones, and give farmers and ranchers certainty about what those markets are going to look like.

While we are still in negotiations on a number of agreements, one deal that we don't need to wait for is the United States-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement. This agreement has already been fully negotiated by our three countries, and Congress can take it up at any point.

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement is a clear and significant win for our farmers and ranchers. Canada and Mexico are the No. 1 and No. 2 export markets for American food and agricultural products. This agreement will preserve and expand farmers' access to these critical markets and will give farmers certainty about what these markets will look like in the long term.

I am particularly pleased with the improvements the agreement makes for U.S. dairy producers. South Dakota has experienced a massive dairy expansion over the past few years, and this agreement will benefit U.S. dairy producers by substantially expanding market access in Canada, which is where U.S. dairy sales have been restricted. The U.S. International Trade Commission estimates that the agreement will boost U.S. dairy exports by more than \$277 million. The agreement will also expand market access for U.S. poultry and egg producers, and it will make it easier for U.S. producers to export wheat to Canada.

Of course, while I have been talking a lot about farmers, the benefits of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement will not be limited to the agricultural industry. Virtually every sector of our economy will benefit from this agreement—from manufacturing to digital services, to the automotive industry. It will create 176,000 new U.S. jobs, will grow our economy, and will raise wages for workers.

The Republicans in the Senate are ready to consider the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. We are just waiting for the House Democrats to stop threatening to oppose the agreement and to show a willingness to put it to an up-or-down vote in the House of Representatives.

The administration has made addressing the Democrats' concerns a priority throughout the negotiation process, and it seems to me that if you are a Democrat who is unhappy with the status quo, voting for the USMCA is the best way to fix it.

I am encouraged by the fact that the Democrats appear to be working with the administration to reach a resolution on this agreement, and I hope they will continue to work with the White House to bring this agreement to a vote as soon as possible in the House of Representatives. America's farmers

and ranchers need the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. While it won't be a cure-all for all of the problems that are facing farm country, it will be a significant step forward.

Congress should pass this agreement as soon as possible and allow farmers and ranchers and the rest of the American economy to start realizing the benefits.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

REMEMBERING MARCA BRISTO

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the disability rights movement is one of the great civil rights achievements of our time, and Chicago's Marca Bristo was that movement's Rosa Parks.

Marca was a visionary and inspiring leader, who helped change Chicago and change the world when it came to the rights of the disabled, and she was my friend.

Sadly, Marca died last week in her adopted hometown of Chicago at 66 years of age.

In typical Marca style, she worked right on up to the few days before her death, trying to bend the arc of history just a little more toward justice before she drew her last breath.

I was happy to join my colleague Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH this week in sponsoring a resolution honoring Marca's life and work.

I would like to take a few moments on the floor today to remember this amazing woman.

While most Americans have never heard of Marca Bristo, few lives went untouched by her lifelong quest on behalf of people with disabilities. She was a nationally and internationally acclaimed leader in the disability rights movement.

She helped to write and to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, which outlawed discrimination against the estimated one in four Americans with disabilities, and she spent the rest of her life making sure the ADA was faithfully implemented.

Along with leaders like Justin Dart, Marca changed the way Americans thought about disabilities. She persuaded us to view the disability experience as a civil rights issue, not just a medical issue.

To Marca's mind, what kept many people with disabilities from leading full lives was not their disability but the barriers they faced. What needed to change, she said, was not the person with disabilities but those obstacles that blocked their path. The problem was not that her wheelchair was too wide for certain doors; the problem was the doors were too narrow for her wheelchair. Remove the barriers, and people with disabilities can lead rich and full lives and make enormous contributions. That is part of what Marca taught me.

She was tough, smart, funny, determined, and fearless. She knew how to motivate others and how to build coalitions.

Her parents actually named her Marcia, but during her freshman year in college, a classmate called her Marca. She liked it, and it stuck.

She moved to Chicago and earned a nursing degree from Rush University College of Nursing in 1976.

In 1977, when Marca was 23 years old, working as a labor-delivery nurse at a Chicago hospital, she and her friend were sitting on the shore of Lake Michigan, when a dog grabbed her favorite pair of sandals and ran into the water with them. Marca dove in to retrieve her shoes, not realizing the water was shallow. She broke her neck and was paralyzed from the waist down for the rest of her life.

Because of her paralysis, she lost her job, her health insurance, her home, her car, and the ability to navigate the city she loved. She thought she would never work again, but luckily the director of Northwestern University's Prentice Women's Hospital thought otherwise and convinced her to return to nursing.

At one point, she attended a work conference in San Francisco and saw for the first time an abundance of curb cuts—curb cuts that enabled people with disabilities to cross the street. It was an eye-opener for Marca.

As she later wrote:

No longer did I see curbs or stairs or inaccessible buses and bathrooms as a problem around which I needed to navigate. Rather, I saw them as examples of societal discrimination—and felt a responsibility to get involved to help people with disabilities, in Illinois and beyond.

In 1980, Marca founded Access Living in Chicago, a nonprofit dedicated to helping people with disabilities live as independently as possible rather than warehoused in institutions.

Access Living led the fight to make public transportation in Chicago more accessible. Marca was not a shrinking violet. In 1984, she joined others, chaining themselves to Chicago Transit Authority buses. She ended up getting arrested, and they ended up filing a lawsuit in reply against the transit agency.

Her determination led to the installation of wheelchair lifts and critical changes to CTA buses and rail stations. Access Living became a disability leadership model for other cities around the country and around the world.

In 1992, Marca cofounded the National Council on Independent Living, which she led for many years.

In 1993, President Clinton named her to head the National Council on Disability. She was the first person with a disability ever to hold that post, and she held it until 2002.

She was elected president of the U.S. International Council on Disabilities and traveled around the world advocating for people with disabilities and their families.

She participated in the negotiation for the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a global accord based on the Americans with

Disabilities Act. More than 160 nations have signed that treaty, including the United States. Sadly, this Senate has failed to ratify that treaty. I worked hours and hours with Marca to try to win the votes in the Senate for this bipartisan measure to help people with disabilities. We even brought former U.S. Senator Bob Dole, a World War II hero and a father of the ADA, to sit on the floor of the Senate when we cast the votes on this treaty. Unfortunately, it did not pass.

Marca called July 26, 1990, the day President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act, "Our Independence Day."

On that day, she said:

This ragtag army of people who couldn't see, hear, walk and talk did what everyone said couldn't be done. We passed the most comprehensive civil rights law since the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

In a 2015 video interview for Rush University Medical Center, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Marca said: "The law for the first time enshrined in federal law that disability is a normal part of the human condition, and the world needed to change."

In July 2017, days before another ADA anniversary, Marca was again fighting for justice. She was 1 of more than 60 who were arrested for protesting against the proposed deep cuts in the Medicaid Program that had been included in a Republican effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

As the Capitol Police wheeled her away, Marca raised a clenched fist and smiled. That is how I am going to remember her: optimistic, determined, even against long odds.

Days after her arrest, another American hero with a disability, John McCain, came to this floor and in the well of this Senate, shocked his party and the Nation by becoming the deciding vote against the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. I like to think my colleague from Arizona, John McCain, saw in Marca Bristo and her determined friends the same courage he had witnessed so often in our military.

My wife Loretta and I extend our condolences to Marca's husband of 32 years, Bob Kettlewell; their two children, Samuel and Madeline; her granddaughter, who was born in June; to Marca's sister Gail; and to her countless friends and colleagues.

Marca made the lives of hundreds of millions of people better. I am going to miss her warm smile, her wise advice, her vision, and her courage.

EMERGENCY FUNDING

Madam President, I rise in opposition today to President Trump's continued efforts to move funding from our military in order to build his beloved wall on our southern border, and I rise as well in defense of the powers given to Congress in article I of the Constitution.

Last week, the President announced he was taking \$3.6 billion from America's military to build his wall. He did

so by canceling 127 military construction projects around the world and in 26 States and territories. Already, President Trump had taken \$2.5 billion from our military earlier this year. Last week's decision brings the total to over \$6 billion—\$6 billion of investments in our American military and national security that the President of the United States has diverted so he can have a bragging point in the reelection campaign about his beloved wall.

This decision has rippled across the country and the world.

Remember the terrible damage Hurricane Maria did in Puerto Rico, which is still being repaired? Our military prioritized \$400 million to rebuild National Guard facilities and the school for military children there. With the stroke of a pen, and without the approval of Congress, the President took away these funds.

Joint Base Andrews in Maryland needed a new childcare facility for military families. Some of the rooms in that current facility have been closed due to mold, which has created overcrowding. There are 130 children on a waiting list to get into this facility. Their parents are paying for expensive off-base childcare. It is unacceptable.

So Congress, on behalf of these military families at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, approved the money to upgrade the childcare center. Once again, with the stroke of a pen, President Trump took the military family childcare funds for his almighty wall.

Military children at Fort Campbell, KY, the home State of the Republican majority leader of the Senate, are forced to use overcrowded classrooms and a cafeteria so small that students are often shipped off to the library to eat.

With the same stroke of a pen, \$62 million that Congress authorized for Senator MCCONNELL's home State of Kentucky to fix the problem are gone, headed to the border of the United States for the President to be able to boast at a rally.

As if these stories weren't troubling enough, the Air Force is also sounding the alarm. A leaked internal review by the Air Force warns that President Trump's decision to cancel 51 Air Force projects poses serious national security risks to our country.

Imagine if the shoe were on the other foot and the President were a member of my party, the Democratic Party. What would we be hearing from the Republican side of the aisle?

One of the projects that has been canceled for the Air Force by the President's effort to divert military funds to his wall is Incirlik Air Base in Turkey. They needed an upgrade for security on their main gate. The Air Force says that without this project, the base is "vulnerable to hostile penetration in the midst of contingency operations and an increased terrorist threat."

For goodness' sake. The President is building a wall in the middle of a desert that is not solving the problem

we face with our southern border and taking money away from the main gate of an Air Force Base in Turkey that has been identified as needing to be rebuilt for security against terrorism?

The report also describes how canceling upgrades to a munitions site at an air base in Guam may impact the ability of fighter and bomber aircraft to operate properly.

I ask my colleagues honestly: Are these risks worth taking from our military so the President can have a walk-off line at one of his political rallies?

U.S. allies across the globe that are committed to our defense are starting to doubt if this White House is still interested in being the leader of the free world.

U.S. troops based in NATO ally countries like Poland, Italy, Germany, and Estonia expected \$770 million in investments in training center and logistical support to push back on Russian aggression in Europe. I can tell you, having visited the Baltic States, how critically important these funds are to remind the people of that region that the United States and NATO allies still stand solidly behind them, as Putin threatens them with aggression on a daily basis, and now President Trump has removed many of these funds. Similarly, U.S. troops in South Korea and Japan were planning on \$670 million to protect them from threats from North Korea and China.

The cancellation of all these projects is based on a national emergency declared by the President that was rejected by both Houses of Congress in bipartisan votes. Congress should not be silent when anyone dismisses the real needs of our men and women in uniform for politics. Nor should it sit back when the President of any party tries to undermine its constitutional duty to provide for the common defense of the United States.

I am greatly concerned that these events set a precedent that undermines the Appropriations Committee, which I have dedicated my Senate career to.

We all remember President Donald Trump's idea that we need a 2,000-mile concrete wall, as he said, "from sea to shining sea," paid for by Mexico. He said it 200 times when he campaigned for the Office of President, but as we have seen, Mexico hasn't put up a peso. The President has decided the American military should pay for it instead. The resulting damage to our military and to the Appropriations Committee's constitutional authority continues to accumulate.

It has to stop, and it can stop if my colleagues on both sides of the aisle can come together to reassert their obligations under the Constitution and provide our military families with the certainty that they haven't been forgotten in the midst of the runup to the 2020 campaign.

I hope all of us think long and hard about the importance of this decision and our obligation to stand behind our men and women in the military.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I want to get straight to the point this morning. I find it incomprehensible that some of our friends across the aisle are repeating the same missteps that turned last fall's Supreme Court confirmation battle into a black mark on the history of this body.

I want to make it clear that I have no desire to relitigate the disputes borne from Justice Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation hearings. I do not want to hear my friends on the other side of the aisle leverage more of the same baseless, salacious allegations in the name of partisan politicking. But when you stop and think about it, since they have chosen to go there, it is imperative that I speak out—that we speak out—about what is transpiring.

I was not in the Senate for the first go-around on this, but I am here now, and I can tell you that I intend to give their arguments exactly the amount of deference and respect they deserve.

Sitting on the sidelines is never easy, but it is especially difficult when you are watching a fight and you know you could get in there and help win that fight. I know this feeling very well. Last fall, I was fighting to go from the House of Representatives to the Senate. I was also fighting to become the first female Senator from the great State of Tennessee—the very first.

While on the campaign trail, I got more than an earful from other Tennessee women who were watching this breathless coverage of Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation. These women were concerned that their voices were not being heard in this debate. They were concerned also for spouses, sons, brothers, and male colleagues. They could see these baseless claims, and they were concerned for the lack of due process. They did not like for 1 minute what they were seeing, and I didn't like it either.

These women came from all political walks of life and all areas of our State. They were disgusted by the nature of the sexual assault allegations, and they were horrified by what they rightly saw as an eagerness to set aside the due process that is so important to this Nation and to the rule of law. It was being set aside in order to make an example out of Kavanaugh.

Were flimsy allegations and social justice buzzwords really the new standard for credibility?

As much as I wanted to reassure these women that sanity would prevail, in the back of my mind I remained fully aware that, if left unchecked, insanity is fully capable of carrying the day. It knows no bounds.

As it turns out, conservatism prevailed in Tennessee, and sanity prevailed in the U.S. Senate. I was humbled when Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh performed my ceremonial swearing-in this past January and

when I received the additional honor of being one of two Republican women afforded a seat on the Senate Judiciary Committee—humbled, truly humbled, but also prepared to stand up for what I know is right.

I will not abide by or participate in the lack of civility that we saw during Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation. We have to realize that this is more serious than just evaluating a final tally of political points on the board. Politicians, journalists, and activists are leveraging unfounded criminal allegations against a duly confirmed Supreme Court justice. I repeat that: They are leveraging unfounded criminal allegations against a duly confirmed Supreme Court justice in an effort to undermine not only his work but ultimately the entire Court as an institution.

Is this honestly what we have come to? Is this the new low of lows? Can no one see the danger in doing this and letting it continue and giving it air to breathe or to thrive? This is a danger. We are a nation of laws, and the Senate is a body built on process and deliberation.

Tennesseans are asking: Who is going to stand and who is going to defend that process in this body?

As a woman, as a new Senator and a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I stand to defend the process and for civility. I refuse to leave this political chaos unchecked, and I welcome my colleagues and my friends across the aisle to join me in recognizing that due process and civil discourse are required for constructive, respectful debate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The Senator from Montana.

TARIFFS

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, we all returned to Washington last week after, in my case, spending 5 weeks in the State of Montana. It is always great being in Montana, being able to get around the State and visit with folks and see the challenges they are dealing with on a daily basis and hear directly from them.

I can tell you that one of the things I heard a lot about—Montana is an ag State—was the price of grain and the price of cattle. The marketplace is very, very depressed. It doesn't matter that Montana is a big State, and it doesn't matter what corner of the State you are in. We have some challenges, and those challenges have been brought about by really, really bad public policy when it comes to tariffs. These tariffs have increased the price of steel, for example, which increases the price of the equipment that folks in agriculture and everybody have to buy.

On the other side of the coin, because of the tariffs that are put on ag commodities, it has driven all ag commodities down. The tariffs on soy, for example, have driven all the commodities down, including wheat, which we raise

a lot of in Montana, but also pulse crops and everything.

In fact, when I was determining what we were going to plant this spring, I was trying to find what we could make money off of. Quite frankly, commodity prices are down across the board, and there wasn't anything that you could turn a profit on. I don't say that being a farmer who wants to complain about prices, because we do that occasionally. I say that because the price of hard red ordinary winter wheat, which probably doesn't mean much to anybody unless you are in agriculture, is about the same price it was in about May of 1978, when I took the farm over. That is not inflation-adjusted prices. That is what it is selling for, a little over \$3.50 a bushel.

If you take a look back at 1978, it doesn't take a nuclear physicist to figure out that things cost a little less back then. You could buy a car for probably about 15 percent of what you are paying for one now, and farm equipment was the same way. It was far, far, far less expensive. My dad bought a brand-new four-wheel drive tractor, for example, 3 years earlier, in 1975. He paid about \$20,000 for it, and today that tractor would run you north of \$200,000.

So we have a lot of challenges out there, and it all starts with the price of ag commodities. It isn't like Mother Nature frowned on us all and put us into a drought or put a hailstorm on us or put locusts on us. It is all man-made.

I think most people in this body would tell you that, as to what is going on with China right now, even though China does need to be held accountable, we can't do it alone. We have to bring our allies in. That is why it is not working, and that is why ag commodity prices are in the tank.

So why should anybody care if you are not involved in agriculture?

There was an old bumper sticker that was on cars a few decades ago that said: If you eat, you are involved in agriculture. That is a fact. If you want to talk about things like food security and being able to have food on the shelves, those family farmers are critically important. If you force them out of business, that is more consolidation, that is less people living in rural America, and that is a problem, and it is less certainty with our food supply.

We feed the world for a good reason—because there are a lot of family farmers out there who work very, very hard each and every day, and we overproduce, and the overproduced items need to be exported. If they are not, the prices go down. That is what we see right now. We see overproduction, because we produce food, and if that food is not exported, the prices go down, and they go down and they go down. Now they are prices that we had 40 years ago.

Now, this administration's solution for this problem is to borrow money from our kids and write farmers

checks. I don't know a farmer out there who wants to go down to the local FSA, or the Farm Service Agency, government office and get a check. We do it, but that is not the preferred place. The preferred place is from the grain elevator or from the livestock auction. But because prices are so low, now farmers have to have a bailout.

People talk about socialism and who is advocating for socialism around here, but the fact is that this is pretty much socialistic. The sad part is that the amount farmers are getting is probably about a tenth, once again, of what they are losing in the marketplace, if we had trade, if we were out promoting trade, and if we were moving the ball forward to get rid of the excess production. But instead, it is tariff after tariff after tariff because we are trying to teach somebody a lesson. Unfortunately, because we don't have our allies onboard with us, we haven't seen much success.

We have a problem. The forefathers set forth three coequal branches of government. Unfortunately, I have been a bit frustrated because the legislative branch hasn't been able to do much about these tariffs, and we need to reinsert ourselves.

I have a bill that I intend to drop in very soon that will empower the legislative branch. Hopefully, we can get it through committee and get it to the floor. It seems that we always ask permission of the administration as to whether we are going to take up any bills on the floor in this body, the greatest deliberative body—it used to be; it is not anymore—when, in fact, we need to take back the power. We need to hold the administration, the executive branch—whether there is a Democrat in the White House or a Republican in the White House—accountable on these issues that revolve around trade.

It is important because we are having a debate right now about whether we should be just a rubberstamp for the executive branch on appropriations. We have given away our power on trade. It is our job to deal with issues of trade. I am talking about Congress's job. I have a bill to bring back some of that power.

I will tell you, I hope that tomorrow all these tariffs and trade issues go away. I don't think that is realistic. In fact, I think we have seen a lot of our foreign trading partners that were traditionally our partners turn to other countries to get their products. I think that is a problem long term and certainly a problem short term because we are feeling it in the short term. When they start getting their ag commodities from Australia and Argentina or some other country, it is hard to get those customers back, even when the trade agreements have been ratified.

I ask the executive branch to quit playing games with American agriculture. I know that most of the farmers support the Trump administration, but I am telling you, we saw a mass ex-

odus off the farms in the 1980s—the family farm agriculture—because of bad policies, due in part to this town, and I am afraid we are going to see that again. I have already seen it in my neighborhood, and I think it is just the start.

It is time that we start to do what we do; that is, we need to export some of this product.

The Farmers Union was in last week, and one of the people in the Farmers Union, from the Montana group, said: What do we do about the excess supply? Well, what we do with the excess supply is what we have always done with the excess supply: We ship it out. We export it. And when those exports dry up, we have wheat. We can't get rid of soy. Corn is in a pinch. As I said earlier, all ag commodities are depressed.

While we sit here and talk about the important stuff that we talk about, just know that the American farmer, the family farmer, is hurting. I will tell you that one thing that made this country great is family farm agriculture. If it gets consolidated, whether it is a family who owns tens of thousands of acres or controls tens of thousands of acres or whether it is a corporation, it is the same thing. You have nobody living in rural America, and it impacts our food security in this country. Quite frankly, it is very bad for democracy.

I invited the President to come to Montana to visit with the producers so he could hear it from their mouths. I haven't gotten a response. The bottom line is, he needs to know that rural America is not New York City. It has challenges, and if we don't do our job and get products exported, we are going to see it change, we are going to see it dry up, and we are literally going to see it blow away. It is not a step forward. It is not making this country great. In fact, it is exactly the opposite.

I hope the President comes to Montana. I hope he visits with the producers. He will find a friendly crowd. I think most of them voted for him. He will be able to hear from the horse's mouth what is happening with trade and hopefully get these trade tariffs and all the things around trade that have been negative for family farm agriculture put behind us. I think time is of the essence. It may be too late for a lot of folks. We may see a lot of good operators no longer able to make a living in agriculture. Time is of the essence.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAXES

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to talk a little bit today about something I am embarrassed about on behalf of the Federal Government. Before I explain why I am embarrassed on behalf of my government, I need to give a little background.

Did you ever stop and think about how much we pay in taxes in this country? We have city taxes. We have county taxes. In Louisiana, we call our counties parishes, so we have parish taxes. We have State taxes. We have fees at all of those levels. Sometimes politicians will try to call a hand in your pocket a fee as opposed to a tax, like you are going to be dumb enough to think that makes a difference. It is still money out of your pocket. And then we have Federal taxes. The government taxes the food we eat, the clothes we buy, the houses we live in, the cars we drive. The government taxes when we work and when we play. If you want to go fishing, you have to pay a tax. If you want to go hunting, you have to pay a tax. The government even taxes us when we die.

Let me talk about the Federal taxes for a second. This is just a fraction of the money people pay. At the Federal level, our main tax is income taxes—corporate income tax, personal income tax. Do you know how much we pay every year—the American people—in corporate and personal income tax? I am going to show you. I am going to write it out because it is impressive. Do you see all those zeros? There are 12 zeros—\$2 trillion every year. Do you know how much \$2 trillion is? That is \$2,000 billion. Do you know how much a billion is? If right now I started counting to a billion, do you know when I would finish? It would take me 32 years. I would finish in 2051. I wouldn't make it; I will be dead by then.

I will tell you how big a billion is. A billion seconds ago, it was 1986 and Ronald Reagan was President. That is how big a billion is. A billion minutes ago, the Romans were conquering Mesopotamia. A billion hours ago, Neanderthals roamed the Earth. That is 1 billion. The American people pay \$2,000 billion in taxes every year—not State and not local; Federal corporate and personal income taxes.

Now, look, we know that as a result of the social contract we have made among ourselves, we are better off living and working together and pooling our money so we can hire cops and build roads and educate our children. We know that is the price to pay in a civilized society, but that is still a lot of money.

Now, I don't know about you, but I get mad when some people cheat—when all people whom I know of cheat on their taxes. That means that law-abiding citizens have to pay more to make up for those who cheat.

Do you know what else makes me mad? What also makes me mad is when the Federal entity to which we pay these taxes has money of ours and they

don't return it. I am not talking about tax refunds. I am talking about something else, and that is going to be the subject of my talk for a few minutes today.

Now, look, the Internal Revenue Service, which is housed, as you know, in the Department of Treasury—they are very aggressive. Oh Lord, you better pay your taxes. If you don't pay your taxes, they are on you like a hobo on a ham sandwich. They will chase you like a hound from Hades. You better pay them the right amount, and you better pay them on time. Most Americans don't like that but are OK with it because they know we have to run government, we have to defend our country, and we have to educate our kids. But what happens when the Department of Treasury, which houses the Internal Revenue Service, owes money to the American people and refuses to give it back? That is what embarrasses me, and that is what makes me angry.

Right now, our U.S. Department of Treasury is holding \$26 billion—remember I told you how big a billion is—it owes to the American people in unclaimed, matured savings bonds. And you know what a savings bond is. That is a loan by an American citizen to our government. We funded World War II in part through savings bonds.

This is how a savings bond works. It is very simple. Let's suppose I go buy a \$100 savings bond. I give \$100 to the U.S. Department of Treasury, which collects \$2 trillion through IRS. I give \$100 to the Department of Treasury. It is a loan. The Treasury takes that \$100 and promises to give me in, say, 20 years, \$200 back. I don't get annual interest payments. There are some exceptions to that. In the old days, I got a paper bond. Today, it is all done electronically. I loan the Federal Government \$100. I wait 20 years, and interest accrues. I don't get the checks. In 2 years, I go down with my savings bond, and I say: OK, I want my \$200.

But sometimes people forget. They put those bonds in a safe deposit box or—today, we don't use paper bonds; we do it electronically. People will forget. In the old days when we used paper bonds, sometimes they would lose those bonds. A lot of times, as a birthday present, grandparents would give a bond to their grandchildren, give them a \$100 bond, and they would say to their son or grandson or granddaughter: Hold on to this bond, and in 20 years, you will have \$200. Of course, sometimes the young people would lose them. They are not really completely lost. The bond might have been lost—the physical bond—in the days when we used paper bonds.

The people who loaned the money to the Federal Government might have forgotten about the bonds, but do you know who knows about the bonds? The U.S. Department of Treasury, because they have the names and the addresses. Right now, they have the names and addresses, and they have the money—

\$26 billion—that they are holding that belongs to the American people, and they won't give it back.

I used to be a State treasurer in Louisiana. I and some my colleagues sued the Federal Department of Treasury. Do you know why we sued them? Because as State treasurers, we have programs called unclaimed property programs—you might have heard about them—where we would return money to people in our States that we would take in from businesses that owed people money but couldn't find the people.

Let's suppose you go rent an apartment back in your home State. You put down a utility deposit, and you move and you don't get back your utility deposit. You forget about it. The utility can't keep that deposit. They are supposed to look for you, but they can't find you. They can't keep that money. It doesn't belong to them. It is a deposit. They have to turn it over to the State treasurer.

The State treasurers of every State work very hard to contact the people and to give them back their utility deposits. Every day, State treasurers return utility deposits, apartment deposits, uncashed payroll checks, lost stocks, lost bonds, and tax refunds. Every State treasurer is very active. They have the infrastructure set up, they have websites, they have computers, and they return this money to people every day. When a business has your money and can't find you, they can't keep it; they have to turn it over to the State treasurer.

So the treasurers sued the U.S. Department of Treasury and said: We have these unclaimed property programs. Give us the names and addresses of these people to whom the Treasury Department owes \$26 billion, and we will give it back to people.

Do you know what the Department of Treasury said? Nothing. Not a thing. They just ignored the treasurers. When we finally got their attention, they said: No, we are not giving it back. We are keeping the money.

Well, the treasurers sued them and are still in court. And not only has the U.S. Department of Treasury not given the money back, they have gone and hired lawyers. They are spending millions and millions and millions of dollars to try to keep this money from the American people.

Remember, the U.S. Department of Treasury—they have the names and they have the addresses. They may be old addresses, but all they would have to do would be to give the names and the old addresses to the State treasurers in every State. For example, in my State in Louisiana—and we have asked Treasury to do this. The U.S. Department of Treasury could just give all the names of all the people in Louisiana to whom this money is owed through savings bonds and give them the addresses, and the treasurer in my State will track these people down and give them back their money. But the U.S. Department of Treasury won't do

it. They are fighting us in court. Do you know why they won't do it? Greed. They figure people will never go claim their money. They are just going to keep it. You can't do that if you are a business. If you are a business in America and you have somebody's money, you have to go look for them—it is a law in every State—and if you can't find them, you have to turn the money over to the State treasurer, and the State treasurer gives it back. Not the Federal Government. Not the Department of Treasury. We are talking real money here.

I am going to give an example. I see my good friend Senator CORNYN over here. He works hard for the people of Texas. They love him. I just came back from San Antonio. They love Senator CORNYN. Do you know how much the U.S. Department of Treasury owes Senator CORNYN's people just in Texas? They are owed \$2.1 billion. This money isn't lost; the Department of Treasury has it. They have the names, and they have the addresses.

Now, as we went along in our lawsuit—and the lawsuit is still pending. It is not mine anymore. I am no longer State treasurer. One of the statements that the Department of Treasury filed in court—I almost laughed. If I had been in court, I would have laughed. They said: Yeah, we have the names and we have the addresses, but it would cost \$128 million to organize the records. That was one of the excuses they gave to the judge. Give me a break. If you believe that, you will never own your own home. If you and I lie to the government, we can go to jail, but if the government lies to us—“Oh, it will take \$128 million to organize the records”—that is called politics. Oklahoma, which is next door to Texas, is owed \$312 million. As far as Michigan, the U.S. Department of Treasury is holding \$773 million in fully redeemed—they are not paying interest anymore—but unclaimed savings bonds from the people of Michigan. Do you think some of those folks in Michigan could use that money right now to maybe save for retirement or maybe to educate their children? Idaho is not very big. It has a bunch of lakes, and it is a great State. It is owed \$128 million. Tennessee is owed \$480 million; Wyoming, \$45 million; and New York, \$1.5 billion.

I am just beside myself. Do you wonder why people hate government? Here it is. We have to pay our taxes in the right amount and on time. If we don't do it, they come and take our first-born, and if we are late, they fine us. This is the IRS under the Department of Treasury. But here they have \$26 billion, and they have the names and they have the addresses, and they won't give it back. It is an embarrassment. It is a disgrace. They should hide their heads in a bag.

Now, I have a bill. I am hoping my colleagues will support it. It is called the Unclaimed Savings Bond Act of 2019, S. 2417. It is a very simple bill. It

would just tell the U.S. Department of Treasury to do its job. It doesn't own this money. It doesn't own this money, it is not theirs, and they need to give it back. And they don't have to spend a lot of time on it. All they have to do is give the names and the addresses to every State treasurer. I will give them their cell numbers if they want it. Just give the names and the addresses to the State treasurers.

I would like to get our Senators involved in Florida, where our Presiding Officer and Senator RUBIO are from. I would like them to have the names. Maybe they could go out—we used to do this when we had unclaimed property in Louisiana. You can go advertise in the paper or on the radio or on television or on the internet and say: I am going to be out at the so-and-so mall this Saturday from 10 to 12 with my computers and my team's computers. Come on out and check your name and see if you have unredeemed savings bonds.

People come out, and you would be surprised, they find their name, and you say: OK. We will get your current address, and we will get you a check in 2 weeks. People say: Gosh, the last time the government gave me any money was never. But they feel a little bit better about their government.

This bill will work. I can't imagine who would oppose this bill except my friends at the Department of Treasury, and they don't have a good reason for opposing it. They just want to keep the money.

I am going to be talking about this a lot because the money is important. People have worked hard for this. But I will tell you what is more important—the principle. We have to pay our taxes in the right amount and on time. When the government has our money, they ought to give it back to us in the right amount and on time.

Thank you for your attention and your time.

I yield to Senator CORNYN, who has over \$2 billion of uncashed savings bonds in his State, thanks to our Department of Treasury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, let me begin my remarks by thanking my friend for, No. 1, visiting Texas this past weekend. We are next-door neighbors. We share a lot in common. But, particularly, I want to thank him for highlighting this injustice. It is shocking to me that a U.S. Senator would have to introduce legislation to pass both Houses and get the President's signature for people to get their money back from the Federal Government. It is shocking, and I didn't know anything about it until the Senator from Louisiana highlighted it, so I thank him for that.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of the bill and would encourage all of our colleagues to join. I can't imagine why it couldn't pass by unanimous consent. I don't even know why we need to pro-

cess this through the normal regular order, as we call it around here, but I wish him good luck and certainly my constituents would like to see that \$2.1 billion back in their pockets instead of the Federal Treasury. So I thank him.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. President, on another matter, during the August break back home, I heard from a startling number of my constituents about their increasing struggles to deal with the cost of their prescription medications. This included stories about skipping their blood pressure medication or diabetics rationing their insulin and people traveling across the border, going to Mexico—to the farmacias in Mexico—to get inhalers at a lower price. Of course, the problem is, you don't know when you go to another country whether it is as advertised, whether it is counterfeit, or whether it is genuine. So there are risks associated with that. But my point is that people are struggling to deal with their drug costs, and they are going to extraordinary means, some of which are potentially dangerous to their health.

I know my constituents back home are frustrated by confusing price hikes. They don't understand the dramatic price differences from one pharmacy to the next. They are terrified about what will happen if the price gets so high that they will have to give up taking their prescriptions altogether.

It is no surprise that a recent Gallup poll found that Americans view the pharmaceutical industry more negatively than any other industry. A whopping 58 percent said that they have a negative view of the pharmaceutical industry, and 48 percent have a negative view of the healthcare industry as a whole. Congress's numbers are much worse than that, but the point is, people are concerned, and they want us to do something about it.

When the products and services these groups provide mean the difference between life and death—which they do—that lack of trust is a bad sign, to be sure. I believe, along with many of my colleagues, that it is time to get to the bottom of these rising costs and provide the American people with some transparency, some clarity, some peace of mind, and hopefully a break in their out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs.

In the Senate we have taken a bipartisan approach that reaches across several of our standing committees, and we have made some serious progress. I would like to remind anybody who is listening what we have done so far and what we need to do next.

Earlier this summer, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee passed a package to end surprise billing to create more transparency and create more competition. The Senate Finance Committee on which I sit passed a package of bills designed to reduce prescription drug prices for seniors and children, and the Judiciary Committee, on which I also

sit, has passed several bills to lower the cost of prescription drugs and stop bad actors from gaming the system.

We have talked to every major player in the supply chain and have asked questions about the confusing practices that are driving up costs. Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the Presiding Officer's leadership when it comes to this topic, knowledgeable as he is about the healthcare industry, beyond the average Senator.

One example of the problem is the anti-competitive behavior of drug manufacturers. Companies pour extensive time and money into research and development of new medications, and that is good. What they get in return is the ability to recover their costs and earn a profit under a patent. These patents justifiably protect the intellectual property of these drugs for a time and are a key driver behind the incredible innovation that occurs here in the United States.

The United States discovers and manufactures more innovative and life-saving drugs than any other country in the world, but we are increasingly seeing companies using the patent system as a shield for competition beyond the life of a patent, and it is time we put that to a stop.

One of the bills in the Judiciary Committee that I introduced is called the Affordable Prescriptions for Patients Act, which would address two circumstances that lead to higher drug costs. First is something called product hopping, which occurs when a company develops a reformulation of a product that is about to lose its patent and pulls the original product from the market. This is done not because the new formula is more effective, necessarily, but because it prevents generic competitors from competing with the original product.

One example is a drug called Namenda, which is used by patients with Alzheimer's disease, a terrible, devastating disease. Near the end of the exclusivity period, the manufacturers switched from a twice-daily drug to a once-daily drug. That move, under the current law, prevented pharmacists from being able to switch patients to a lower cost generic—even though it is just as effective—so the company could continue to earn a profit under this exclusivity provision under the patent laws. By defining these types of anti-competitive behaviors, the Federal Trade Commission would be able to bring antitrust suits against the bad actors who deliberately game the system.

Secondly, the bill disarms patent thickets, which occur when an innovator uses multiple overlapping patents or patents with identical claims to make it harder for competitors to enter the field. One example is the drug HUMIRA, which is commonly used to treat arthritis and a number of other conditions. AbbVie, the manufacturer of HUMIRA, has 136 patents and 247 patent applications on that drug,

which has been available for more than 15 years. This type of behavior makes it very difficult for biosimilar manufacturers to bring a product to market—competition. While the patent on the actual drug formula may have expired, there are still, in this case, hundreds of other patents to sort through. Litigating all of these extraneous patents is expensive, difficult, and unnecessary. This artificial structure denies market entry for competitors years beyond the exclusivity period that the law intends to grant. Today, there are five competitors of HUMIRA that are available in Europe, but they are blocked from being sold in the United States until 2023.

This bill will not stifle innovation or punish those who use the patent system as it is intended; it simply stops the bad guys from profiting off the backs of patients. This is a critical component of our efforts to bring down drug costs, and I am glad this proposal received unanimous support in the Judiciary Committee.

Later this week, the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee is holding a hearing about pharmaceutical companies gaming the system, and I am eager to see what kinds of proposals our friends in the House introduce as part of this effort.

I think it is fair to say that we have done some serious work here in the Senate when it comes to reducing prescription drug costs, but we have work ahead of us to do. In other words, we have to bring them to the floor for a vote, and I hope we do so soon.

I appreciate the countless Texans who have reached out and communicated with me and who continue to reach out to share their concerns and their stories about unnecessarily high out-of-pocket drug costs. I am committed to working with all of our colleagues across the aisle to address these rising healthcare costs generally and to ensure that drug companies put patients before profits.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

NOMINATION OF JOHN RAKOLTA, JR.

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on behalf of the nomination of Mr. John Rakolta to become the Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Rakolta is the owner of a construction company that builds major projects like factories, churches, hospitals, and airports. His firm guides the work of thousands of workers here in the United States and in countries around the globe. With revenues of approximately \$1.7 billion annually, he has built one of the largest and most successful general contractors in the Nation.

I presume this success has made him a prosperous person, but he is also a person who is actively engaged in his community. He has served on the boards of numerous organizations, several of which have focused on the reju-

venation of his city of Detroit and its less advantaged citizens. He has also received so many awards that it would be impractical to list them all here today, but I note that he has been honored by such groups as United Way, the Michigan Black Chamber of Commerce, the Urban League of Detroit, the Boy Scouts of America, and New Detroit.

Of course, my friends on the other side of the aisle are dutiful in their examination of any possible flaw. I am convinced that the concerns they may have raised are not well-founded, and he is, in fact, entirely qualified and appropriately nominated to this important position.

I note that I am biased in favor of Mr. Rakolta because I have known him personally for more than 30 years. He and his family have spent dozens of evenings in the home of my parents, studying the teachings of their faith. He is a man who makes commitments only after a great deal of thought, and when they are made, he is fully loyal to them in his business, in his community, in his Nation, in his faith, and in his marriage and family of 4 children and 11 grandchildren.

I know John Rakolta as a man of honor and integrity, and I am convinced that he will serve the country well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Rakolta nomination?

Mr. ROMNEY. Madam President, 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. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

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

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), 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 63, nays 30, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 283 Ex.]

YEAS—63

Barrasso	Coons	Fischer
Blackburn	Cornyn	Gardner
Blunt	Cotton	Graham
Boozman	Cramer	Grassley
Braun	Crapo	Hassan
Burr	Cruz	Hawley
Capito	Daines	Hoelen
Cassidy	Enzi	Hyde-Smith
Collins	Ernst	Inhofe

Isakson	Murphy	Shaheen
Johnson	Paul	Shelby
Jones	Perdue	Sinema
Kennedy	Peters	Stabenow
King	Portman	Sullivan
Lankford	Risch	Tester
Lee	Romney	Thune
Manchin	Rounds	Tillis
McConnell	Rubio	Toomey
McSally	Sasse	Van Hollen
Moran	Scott (FL)	Wicker
Murkowski	Scott (SC)	Young

NAYS—30

Baldwin	Feinstein	Murray
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Reed
Brown	Heinrich	Rosen
Cantwell	Hirono	Schatz
Cardin	Kaine	Schumer
Carper	Klobuchar	Smith
Casey	Leahy	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Warner
Duckworth	Menendez	Whitehouse
Durbin	Merkley	Wyden

NOT VOTING—7

Alexander	Harris	Warren
Bennet	Roberts	
Booker	Sanders	

The nomination was confirmed.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Kenneth A. Howery, of Texas, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Sweden.

Mitch McConnell, David Perdue, John Cornyn, John Barrasso, Mike Crapo, John Thune, Tim Scott, John Hoeven, Shelley Moore Capito, Kevin Cramer, John Boozman, Steve Daines, Richard Burr, James E. Risch, Roy Blunt, Thom Tillis, Martha McSally.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Kenneth A. Howery, of Texas, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Sweden, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

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) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

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

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET),

the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN), and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 63, nays 29, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 284 Ex.]

YEAS—63

Barrasso	Graham	Murphy
Blackburn	Grassley	Paul
Blunt	Hassan	Perdue
Boozman	Hawley	Portman
Braun	Hoeven	Risch
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Romney
Capito	Inhofe	Rounds
Carper	Isakson	Rubio
Cassidy	Johnson	Sasse
Collins	Jones	Scott (FL)
Coons	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Shaheen
Cotton	King	Shelby
Cramer	Lankford	Sinema
Crapo	Lee	Sullivan
Cruz	Manchin	Thune
Daines	McConnell	Tillis
Enzi	McSally	Toomey
Ernst	Merkley	Warner
Fischer	Moran	Wicker
Gardner	Murkowski	Young

NAYS—29

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Rosen
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Schatz
Brown	Hirono	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Smith
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Udall
Duckworth	Murray	Van Hollen
Durbin	Peters	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Reed	

NOT VOTING—8

Alexander	Harris	Warren
Bennet	Roberts	Wyden
Booker	Sanders	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 63, the nays are 29.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Kenneth A. Howery, of Texas, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Sweden.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:20 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

TRIBUTE TO JOHNNY ISAKSON

Mr. PERDUE. Madam President, I rise today with mixed emotions. I rise

to recognize an incredible Georgian, a true statesman, a titan of the United States Senate, and, maybe most important, a friend to me and many people here in this town and back home in Georgia: Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON.

Like everyone, I was surprised and saddened to hear of JOHNNY's upcoming retirement. Since my very first day in the Senate walking through this door back here to be sworn in with JOHNNY escorting me, I have come to revere this guy. He has been a mentor that I have looked up to. He has been a great leader for our State for many years. He has been a reliable and effective colleague. Most of all, he has been a friend whom I deeply cherish.

It will be hard to see him go, but the reality is he won't go. He will still be involved here. I am sure I will get the phone calls about when we might have disagreed on a vote or why didn't I think about this. He has been a tremendous partner for me these last 4 years.

However, JOHNNY has left a profound legacy that is worth celebrating. It is one that we should all strive to follow here in this body. He epitomizes the best of this body, the United States Senate.

His legacy can be summed up in one word: service. No matter what he does, JOHNNY puts other people before himself, and this has continued since the first day I knew him back when he was running a real estate company in Atlanta, GA. JOHNNY puts other people first before himself. He doesn't do it for recognition or fame. Many times, he does it when people don't even notice or know he did it. He does it because it is the right thing to do.

He served his country as a member of the Georgia Air National Guard. He served his community as a Sunday schoolteacher for 30 years. I have done that, and I know that is a labor of love. That takes a lot of work.

He served the people of Georgia in the statehouse and the State senate and later in both houses of the U.S. Congress. In fact, he is the only Georgian to ever have done that. No matter what role JOHNNY has been in, he is always focused on helping others.

His dedication to service is even more impressive because it has produced incredible results for our country. This town has a lot of activity, but it is short on results. JOHNNY knew the difference. For example, one of JOHNNY's top priorities in Congress had been to take care of our country's veterans. Georgia is home to over 700,000 veterans today. As a veteran himself, JOHNNY treats each one of them as his own sister or brother. When JOHNNY saw the shameful conditions and mismanagement happening at the VA, he immediately sprang into action.

Fixing the VA seemed impossible, but no challenge was too large for JOHNNY ISAKSON. Thanks to him, as chairman of the Senate Veterans Administration Committee, we have made incredible progress on this and many