

Mattis said. He may be the most respected military leader we have, even though he is in retirement. He said: This makes it much more likely that ISIS gains strength and can hurt us.

What the heck is going on here? This transcends any ideological differences we may have—whether we agree with President Trump or disagree and whether we think he is a good President or think he is an awful President. This goes beyond that. What is going on?

After Republicans spent years criticizing our former President, President Obama, for simply failing to recite the phrase “radical Islamic terror,” then our Republican friends should be apologetic at what the President has done. It is not simply reciting this phrase. The President, through his actions, whether it is inadvertent or not, has made radical Islamic terror more real and more dangerous.

In one fell swoop, President Trump has deserted our partners, emboldened three of our chief adversaries, provided a lifeline to ISIS fighters who have been taken off the battlefield, and put American troops and America in harm’s way. Truly, this is one of the most thoughtless and dangerous policy changes that President Trump could have made. That it was made seemingly on a whim—without consulting our military commanders, without notifying Congress, and, most egregiously, without thinking its consequences through—makes it even more alarming.

We have entered a dangerous moment, my friends. It is increasingly clear to everyone that the President’s erratic decision making has endangered our national security and the security of our partners and allies around the world. Strong sanctions, while good and justified, will not be sufficient in undoing that damage, nor will they stop the consequences stemming from the ISIS jailbreak.

So the first step, as Congress returns, is for Democrats and Republicans to join us in passing a resolution making clear that both parties demand that the President’s decision be reversed.

This is bipartisan, but our Republican colleagues have a special place here because they will have far more success in getting the President to reverse course and change his views. There is a solemn obligation on every one of the 53 Republican Members here.

They know it is dangerous. Are they going to still be afraid to criticize President Trump? They have not, so far, but this resolution is the strongest action we can take.

Ultimately, of course, the only person able to immediately stop this tragedy from unfolding is the President himself. The President made the decision alone. He alone is responsible for its consequences. President Trump, hopefully, importuned by Congress, Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate, will use this moment—must use this moment—to step

up, admit his grave mistake, and correct course.

I yield the floor.

#### 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 and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Barbara McConnell Barrett, of Arizona, to be Secretary of the Air Force.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### WHISTLEBLOWERS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, we have heard a lot about whistleblowers in the past several weeks. There has been an outpouring of concern for whistleblowers ever since word came out that there was a whistleblower complaint that implicates the current administration.

A lot of those on the other side of the aisle, expressing support for whistleblowers, to the best of my recollection, haven’t expressed the same level of concern for whistleblowers in the last administration.

Well, welcome to the table. I hope you stay at the table quite a while.

I have said for years that it is critical that we protect the whistleblower process to incentivize the disclosure of true waste, fraud, and abuse of the taxpayer’s money. Those processes must be carefully followed by all whistleblowers, and that process must be respected by our government’s institutions. Those legal processes are especially important for government employees who work in the intelligence field. Whistleblowers who act in good faith, who comply with the disclosure process set out by law, and who report their concerns through proper channels deserve to be heard and deserve to be protected.

I have also said that first-, second-, and third-hand information doesn’t make or break a whistleblower. If they follow the procedure, that is really most important. However, hearsay is a factor to take into account when analyzing the strength of underlying alle-

gations. Clearly, first-hand knowledge is much more powerful than second- and third-hand knowledge. That is just common sense.

It is common sense no matter what the allegations are or who the subject is, and there needs to be a consistent approach in the way that Congress conducts oversight. On April 8 of this year, I spoke on this Senate floor about the need for consistent oversight. I pointed out clear double standards between what the Democrats are doing to the Trump administration and the blind eye that they have used on any fact pattern that might damage their political narrative.

Let me remind the Democrats that I threatened to subpoena the President’s son and that my staff later deposed that son. In fact, I investigated alleged Russian collusion with the Trump campaign and interviewed more than 10 people connected to the June 2016 famous Trump Tower meeting, many of them Trump campaign officials. By the way, I also welcomed Democrats’ participation in those interviews. The Democrats did participate. But, unfortunately, the same equal access and transparency doesn’t exist in the House of Representatives these days as they do oversight of what has gone on with the famous telephone call to the Ukrainian President.

I have routinely challenged the administration’s policies and engaged in robust oversight to hold this administration accountable. My oversight and investigation units have sent out almost 300 letters to the executive branch since President Trump took his oath of office. So I think I can declare myself an equal-opportunity overseer because I seek facts, irrespective of party and no matter where they lead.

I don’t think many of the Democrats today can say the same thing. These folks today, who are suddenly so concerned about congressional oversight, are the same ones who had no interest whatsoever in defending the institutions of the legislative branch when the Obama administration was in office.

Quite frankly, I find it all too convenient that the Democrats today have used allegations of wrongdoing against the President that actually apply much more clearly to their own political leaders. Let us begin down this road with the now-debunked Russia collusion investigation.

First, the Clinton campaign hired Fusion GPS to do opposition research against candidate Trump. Second, the Democratic National Committee did the very same thing. Third, Fusion GPS hired Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence officer, to compile the famous Steele dossier.

Even James Comey, a former FBI Director, a man who leaked sensitive government records to spark a special counsel investigation, called that Steele dossier “salacious and unverified.” That same Steele dossier factored heavily in the FBI’s investigation against Trump.

Fourth, Fusion GPS then—would you believe it—used Russian Government sources for information for that Steele dossier.

Now, it is a fact, not merely an allegation, that the Clinton campaign and the Democratic Party used a foreign intel officer and information from the Russian Government to undermine the Trump campaign and later the Trump administration. And that is not Trump. No, Trump didn't do any of that. It was the Democrats. The Democrats' action literally fit their own definition of collusion. Maybe that is why the Democrats have failed to seek documents and information relating to how and why the now-debunked FBI investigation into Russian collusion started, because the Democrats would be front and center in that investigation.

Special Counsel Mueller's investigation didn't look at the Democrats' role in collusion, either. After 2 years, more than 2,800 subpoenas, approximately 500 search warrants and witness interviews, and \$30 million in taxpayers' money, that report ignored what the Clinton campaign and Democrats did. I can see why President Trump would be so frustrated at being incorrectly painted as a Russian agent.

So what is next? Now that the collusion narrative has been destroyed, the Democrats have turned to Ukraine. First, the news reports said Trump offered a quid pro quo, and then Trump released not only the call transcript with the Ukrainian President but the intelligence community complaint. Those were extraordinary acts of transparency, and with transparency comes accountability. The call and complaint showed no quid pro quo. The call showed that Trump was concerned about whether Ukraine had a role in the debunked Russia collusion narrative.

This is a reasonable concern, and it is a concern that I share. Accordingly, since I share that concern, on July 20, 2017, I wrote to the Justice Department about reports of brazen efforts by the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton's campaign to use the Government of Ukraine for the express purpose of finding negative information on then-Candidate Trump in order to undermine the Trump campaign.

Ukrainian officials reportedly "helped Clinton's allies research damaging information on Trump and his advisers." Moreover, Nellie Ohr, the wife of Justice Department official Bruce Ohr, stated during a congressional interview that Fusion GPS used a Ukrainian politician as a source for derogatory material against then-Candidate Trump. It is no wonder, then, that President Trump is concerned about Ukraine's involvement in the debunked Russian collusion narrative.

The phone call also showed that he was concerned about then-Vice President Biden firing a prosecutor who was investigating one of the largest natural gas firms in the world. That firm happened to employ Biden's son. Years

later, Biden bragged about getting the prosecutor fired. This has been seen on television a lot:

We're not going to give you the billion dollars. They said, you have no authority. You're not the president. The president said—I said, call him. I said, I'm telling you, you're not getting the billion dollars. I said, you're not getting the billion. I'm going to be leaving here in, I think it was about six hours. I looked at them and said: I'm leaving in six hours. If the prosecutor is not fired, you're not getting the money. Well—

Then he used a cuss word.

He got fired. And they put in place someone who was solid at the time.

The Democrats have argued that Trump has tried to get the Government of Ukraine to look into this matter to benefit his political campaign. Yet it doesn't sound like there is much concern from many on the other side of the aisle about what Biden claimed to have done.

There is also another call transcript I would like to share. This one says the following:

We put some more ideas down to resolve the airport dispute we have with British Airways, USAir, and American Airlines. Would you take another look at that and see if we can get it done?

Further quoting:

It's sort of a big deal here. . . . In a political season, it would be big over here to get this open sore resolved. If you could have somebody take a look at it.

Well, that was President Bill Clinton asking for a political favor during the 2000 Presidential election between Al Gore and George Bush. I don't hear any objection whatsoever from the Democrats about the substance of that call.

Now the Democrats have also accused the President of obstructing Congress. Here, too, I think they have selective memory.

The Democrats in the Obama Justice Department didn't bat an eye when Clinton's associates deleted records subject to congressional subpoena and preservation orders. In March of 2015, Secretary Clinton's attorneys had a conference call with Paul Combetta, the man who helped manage Clinton's nongovernment server. After that call, he deleted Clinton's emails with BleachBit, a software program designed to prevent forensic recovery. Combetta admitted he lied to the FBI in his initial interviews and got immunity from the FBI in exchange for agreeing to tell the truth.

So the Obama administration gave immunity to the person who deleted Clinton's emails after a call with her attorneys. To this very day, the FBI has yet to explain why they took that course of action. During the course of the FBI's investigation, it recovered thousands of work-related emails that were not turned over to the State Department by Secretary Clinton. The FBI also recovered work-related emails that Secretary Clinton and her associates apparently deleted. All of this is very clear evidence of alienation of Federal records, which happens to be a Federal crime.

What also troubles me about one aspect of the Clinton investigation is that the FBI agreed to limit the scope of their review to her time as Secretary of State. That eliminated potentially highly relevant emails before and after her tenure that could have shed light on why she operated a nongovernment server. It also eliminated emails around the time of that conference call that could have shown what exactly was intended in deleting those emails. That limitation of scope defies reason.

Lastly, the FBI agreed to destroy records and laptops of Clinton's associates after reviewing them. That is an astonishing agreement in light of the fact that these records could have been relevant to an ongoing congressional inquiry that the FBI knew about.

So where were the Democrats when all of that happened? Where was their outrage at the potential obstruction of justice and obstruction of congressional oversight? Seems to me that if the Democrats want to be consistent, they will have to address what was done and what was totally ignored in the Clinton investigation. Russia. Clinton. Ukraine. The Democrats have ignored facts relating to these investigations that would destroy their political narrative, but facts matter, and the facts are not going to go away.

It is a shame that they have gone down this road in such a blatant attempt to remove a duly-elected President from power simply because they can't get over the 2016 election. Instead of coming together to work for the American people and to pass trade deals and legislation that would lower drug costs for seniors, the Democrats choose to gin up false political controversies while ignoring the involvement of their own political leaders.

Get over yourselves. All of us will be footnotes to footnotes in history. It is the policies that we leave behind that will matter for future generations, not smear campaigns.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

#### PENSIONS

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I thank Senators MANCHIN and STABENOW for joining us today. Senators BALDWIN and CASEY will come later to shine a light on the more than 1 million workers and retirees across this country who are on the verge of facing massive cuts to the pensions they have earned.

I want to thank the workers and retirees who are in Washington this week. You will see teamsters, sheet metal workers, mine workers, carpenters, ironworkers, bakers and confectioners—retirees, mostly—who have earned this retirement but because of an action in this body, simply haven't had that retirement promise fulfilled. They are demanding that Congress honor the dignity of their work and honor the promise of those pensions.

The crisis affects thousands in my State of Ohio and affects the massive

Central States pension plan, the United Mine Workers pension plan, the Ironworkers Local 17 pension plan, the Southwest Ohio carpenters pension plan, the bakers and confectioners pension plan, and others in every State in this country. We are talking about our entire multiemployer pension system. If it collapses, it won't be just the retirees who will feel the pain. Current workers will be stuck paying into pensions they will never receive, and small businesses will be left drowning in pension liability they cannot afford to pay. It will have ripple effects throughout our economy.

Let's be clear. If we do nothing, this could trigger a recession perhaps on par with the housing crisis. And we know what Wall Street greed did in the housing crisis, and we know what could happen here if Senator McCONNELL doesn't move on this. We know who gets hurt the most every single time. Small businesses that have been in the family for generations could face bankruptcy. Workers will lose jobs as businesses are forced to close shop. These businesses and employees did everything right. They contributed to these pensions, in many cases over decades.

Too often, people in this town don't understand the whole point of collective bargaining, don't understand the collective bargaining process. People give up dollars today for the promise of a secure retirement with good healthcare and a pension. They give up dollars today with a promise of having a pension and healthcare. These workers' lives and livelihoods will be devastated if Congress doesn't do its job.

When I think about the responsibility we have, I think about the words of worker Larry Ward at a hearing at the statehouse in Columbus last year. He said:

I don't understand how it is that Congress would even consider asking us to take a cut to my pension, or see it go away entirely, when it had no problems sending billions to the Wall Street crooks who caused this problem in the first place.

Don't forget that what happened on Wall Street had an impact on these pensions.

He went on to say:

They used that to pay themselves bonuses. We use our pensions to pay for medicine and food and heat.

It is bad enough that Wall Street squandered workers' money; it is worse that the government that is supposed to look out for these folks ignores the promise that was made to these workers. The President—who essentially stood by and did nothing—would say it is disgraceful.

That is why these workers are fighting back. We have kept this on the agenda because of them, because they refuse to give up. Workers rallied, called, and wrote letters. We all have seen the camo UMWA t-shirts. These workers have rallied in the name of Butch Lewis, a great Cincinnati who helped lead this fight and passed away far too soon while fighting for his fel-

low workers. His wife, Rita, has continued this fight and has become a leader and an inspiration to me and so many others. She once told me that the workers in this crisis feel like they are invisible. They are not invisible to Senator MANCHIN, Senator STABENOW, or to me. I know they are not invisible to my colleague Senator PORTMAN, who has put in months of work in good faith on this issue on the committee and continues this year. I know he is committed and I am committed, and my colleagues on the floor today—again, Senators MANCHIN, STABENOW, CASEY, and BALDWIN will be joining us. We are committed to these miners, teamsters, these retirees and workers and small businesses. We will not give up. We are continuing to work on a bipartisan solution.

It comes back to the dignity of work. When work has dignity, we honor the retirement security that people earned. We respect collective bargaining. We know collective bargaining created the middle class. I urge my colleagues in this body—colleagues with a good pension and good healthcare paid for by taxpayers—I urge my colleagues in this body to think about those retired workers and the stress they are facing.

Join us. Let's pass a solution that honors their work and keeps our promise. If you love this country, you fight for the people who make it work.

I yield to Senator MANCHIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I want to thank my colleague from Ohio, Senator BROWN, and also Senator STABENOW, Senator CASEY, and all those who feel as strongly as we do and have constituents in our States who really helped build this country and deserve the respect we give them and also the hard fight to make sure we do the right thing for them.

We are here today to bring attention to the issue of American workers' pensions. I thank you for allowing me to speak to the ever-present issue that our retired workers face, which is the security of their pensions. My colleagues and I have come to the floor to speak on behalf of some of America's hardest workers.

It has been 285 days since I introduced the American Miners Act, which would protect miners' pensions from becoming collateral during coal mine bankruptcies. This is something that should have been done. It has been on Leader McCONNELL's desk for quite some time. We could have taken care of this a few years ago. We got the healthcare part done, but they split it apart, and we weren't able to get the pensions.

Miners rely on their hard-earned pensions in retirement. They should be secured even if the coal companies file bankruptcy. We must act, and this cannot happen without bipartisan support. The coal miners, autoworkers, Teamsters, steelworkers, and every other worker that invest in their pension

funds deserve to have stability and security in their retirement. The multiemployer pension system in the United States is in crisis.

Approximately 130 multiemployer pension plans, including the United Mine Workers of America 1974 Pension Fund, are expected to become insolvent in the next few years. The miners' pension fund alone, a critical plan that covers 82,000 retired miners—25,000 of those in West Virginia and 20,000 fully vested current workers—is projected to become insolvent by 2022. Remember that date, 2022. But there is a catch to that. We have one major coal company in the United States on the fringe of bankruptcy as I speak to you today. If they fall into bankruptcy, this whole pension plan for the miners goes into turmoil. By September 2020—within a year from now—the coal miners could see drastic cuts to their benefits if we don't act. If the UMWA Pension Fund becomes insolvent, there will be a snowball effect for the central pensions.

It has been said that the recession of 2007 and 2008 will be a blip on the radar screen compared to what this will do to our economy nationwide. The companies are going to walk away scot-free. It is unacceptable that some of our hardest workers have to beg for the money that they put into the pension fund over years and years of hard work.

Yet this is not only coal miners' pensions. It is bringing attention to all the pension plans in America. Everyone deserves to have stability in their retirement, especially those who have paid into pension plans for decades. This fight is for each and every one of them. To be clear, a pension is not just given to these employees. You don't just go to work and they say: We are going to give you a pension. It is going to be figured into your pay, and it will be deducted from your pay for you as the employee to pay part and an employer is supposed to match it. Someone is putting in money, someone is taking money from someone's paycheck, and they are hopefully putting it into a safe place or safe investment.

How can it be that when they go bankrupt they lose everything? Who gets it? Who walks away with their money? That is what we are talking about. This funding is set aside from the employee's paycheck throughout their career and matched by their employer. Workers invest in their pensions. They take a cut in pay over time to ensure that they have security in retirement. Rather than taking money home to their family, they say: This will be fine. In 20 years from now, 25 years from now, 30 years from now, I will have something I can rely on that will basically provide stability for my family. It is truly their money that we are talking about.

The law of the land—the law of this great country—allows companies to not pay their former employees' hard-earned pensions when they go bankrupt. They don't say: Okay, if you are

going to declare bankruptcy, the first thing you have to do is pay the employees. You must pay the people who put their money in. Make sure they get their money. That is all. And then we can work out the rest.

But, no, we don't do it that way. Their CEOs receive bonuses. At the bankruptcy hearing, they will get a bonus. All the financial institutions get taken care of first. There is nothing left for the employee. The person's money is gone. Somebody else got it. It just doesn't make any sense at all. It is not who we are as a great country. It makes no sense, whatsoever, how the laws evolved into that, unless there is pure, unadulterated American greed that allowed this to happen.

We have to reverse it. It is the law of the land. Guess what? We are the lawmakers of the land. We are the ones who can change this. This is permitted because the courts and our bankruptcy laws continue to allow the companies to break their promises to the workers and shed their obligations to pay the hard-earned pension benefits. They are able to reemerge from bankruptcy in good financial shape. They are able to shirk all their responsibilities and take all of somebody else's money and come out of this OK. They are ready to do business again.

I am sorry. The same old-same old is not going to happen. Then the Federal Government is left with the burden to provide a percentage of the pensions owed to these employees. This comes because we have Federal guarantees. That is about ready to go bankrupt, too. We are going to break it because of people not taking care of the people who did the work. It comes straight out of the pockets of everyday Americans from their taxes instead of from the companies who walk away without managing their obligations to their employees and families. That is why my colleagues and I have come together today to bring to light these issues that affects 10.6 million Americans.

In West Virginia, every time a mine closes, the miners get the rug pulled out from under them. It has been happening far too long. Many lose their jobs and livelihoods, and many others lost their healthcare and pensions. This year alone, 1,200 coal miners, their widows, and family members could also lose their healthcare coverage.

For those of you who think this is just another Big Government program, let me share a little history with you. In 1946, due to the horrendous working conditions our miners faced every day, there was a nationwide strike coming right out of World War II. It brought our Nation's economy to its knees. President Truman knew this could not continue. He dispatched the Secretary of Interior Julius Krug to meet with the president of the United Mine Workers of America, John L. Lewis. They ended that strike by signing the Krug-Lewis agreement which created a retirement fund and healthcare benefits

for our Nation's coal miners and their families that had the full backing of the United States Government. What we are saying is it was so important that we continue to work and produce the energy this country needed—basically, it wasn't the government giving them anything. They were saying that, for every ton of coal that was sold, a portion of that revenue from the coal that was sold would have to go towards the miners' pension and the miners' retirement.

Over 70 years ago, President Harry Truman recognized the importance of coal that our miners produced for this country and promised that the government would guarantee our coal miners' benefits in return of their services. He was guaranteeing that money would be there for them. In turn, our coal miners propelled the American economy, ushered in decades of economic growth, started an energy boom that made the U.S. a superpower, and helped our Nation to victory in two world wars. This agreement was a sacred promise between workers and our country, and it captured the very best of America.

Unfortunately, over 70 years later, we are still fighting to make good on that promise. After securing healthcare benefits for retired coal miners, we proved that Congress can work together and put partisan politics aside. It is a philosophy that I have followed throughout my life in public service—in the West Virginia State Legislature, as a former Governor of the State of West Virginia, and now as a Senator representing the State of West Virginia.

I know that my fellow colleagues here today are fighting for solutions with me. I am asking all of our colleagues here in the Senate and in the House to join us in this fight. To be successful, we must address this in a bipartisan way. It is not who we are to be divided as we have been. It is not who we are as a country to have this toxic atmosphere that we come to. I tell people that I go to work in a hostile work environment every day. People don't want to work together. They are not expected to work together anymore. It is the norm to fight.

That is not true where I come from. We never got anything accomplished by fighting in West Virginia. I hope that, together, we can work out a solution to this terrible issue facing our Nation and our workers so that they can retire peacefully without a constant worry of losing their hard-earned pensions.

Let me tell you what the average pension paid to a miner is when they retire—and most of this goes to the widows because the miners have passed away. It is around \$600 a month. They worked 20 and 30 years in the mines. This is not a windfall for anybody. It is a sustenance that just absolutely keeps them alive so that they can retire and live peacefully. That is all they are asking for.

I am proud to stand here today with my fellow colleagues, and we are going

to fight to keep our commitment to our citizens of our respective States in this great country.

I am glad to yield to my dear friend and my colleague from Michigan, Senator STABENOW.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague. I think he stepped to the back. No one has been a better champion for our miners and their families than Senator JOE MANCHIN. Every single day, he brings to us the needs of our coal miners and people who have literally fueled a generation beyond our economy. I want to thank Senator MANCHIN for his leadership, and also thank Senator BROWN for his leadership as well. The two of them together are leading our efforts.

I am proud to be joining with them to focus on an issue that is hurting working men and women across Michigan and across the country. It is an issue that, quite frankly, I can't believe that, in the Senate, we are having to actually talk about why people should get the pension that they have paid into their whole life. I can't believe that we even have to have this as an issue or the fact that we are having to fight to get the attention of the majority leader and the majority in the Senate who actually bring up legislation to help people get the pension they have paid into their whole working life. This ought to be a given. We used to think it was. It is wrong that it is not today.

For generations, millions of working people built better lives for themselves and their families with jobs that provided more than just a paycheck. Folks worked really hard, and in exchange for a job well done, they could count on basic benefits, including healthcare and a secure retirement, coming through a pension that they paid into while they were working. These workers didn't just build their own families. They literally built the middle class.

I can tell you, coming from Michigan, that is exactly what happened. They built our economy. They built our American way of life, and they just assumed that America would keep its promises, that the companies would keep their promises, that our laws would be set up in a way that they could trust would work, and that the money they were putting into a pension and retirement security would be there for themselves and their families. I don't think that is too much to ask.

Many of these coal miners, truck drivers, construction workers, auto-workers, and others gave up raises—as my colleagues already talked about—in exchange for retirement security. They would negotiate, and they would say that, rather than get that money in my paycheck now, I want to put it into my retirement so that I know it is there for myself and my family going forward.

They held up their end of the bargain. Unfortunately, that bargain is

now crumbling for too many. Imagine what it would be like to have to cut your family budget 50 percent or 60 percent or even 70 percent and still get the bills paid and keep food on the table.

I talked to a gentleman from Michigan named John who lives in Monroe. He doesn't have to imagine that because he and his family are living that every day. John is a retired diesel mechanic whose pension benefits were slashed 72 percent. For any one of us, imagine if our incomes were slashed 72 percent. That started for him in January 2018.

As you can only imagine, the past 2 years have been a tremendous hardship for him and for his family. They have been using their savings, as he said to me, to pay the bills for the past 2 years. They have cut everything non-essential and are now cutting even the essentials from their budget. John and Kathy, his wife, used to be able to help out their children, including a son who is disabled, but they no longer have the means to do that, which is something that is really devastating for them.

John said: "The mental strain and anxiety we are enduring because of the loss of a guaranteed income has become increasingly difficult."

Kathy added that it is hard for people to understand what it is like to live on just one-quarter of the income that one used to have.

Kathy and John aren't alone. That is why we are on the floor. That is why we are asking—demanding—that action be taken on their behalf. Between 1 million and 1.5 million American workers and retirees are in pension plans that are at serious risk of becoming insolvent within the next 20 years. As well, by the end of this year, as Senator MANCHIN said, more than 1,200 coal miners and their family members could lose their healthcare coverage.

These hard-working Americans deserve better than this. Right now, they are just waiting and waiting and waiting for the U.S. Senate to act—for the Senate majority leader and the Republican majority to decide it is important to act on their behalf. It has now been 83 days since the House of Representatives passed the Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pensions Act—83 days. We have plenty of time to take this up on the Senate floor. We have plenty of time to take it up. There needs to be a sense of urgency about doing it because John and Kathy certainly feel that sense of urgency as they are trying to pay the bills and do what they can to support their children. They feel that every day.

This bill is the companion legislation to what we have called the Butch Lewis Act. Thanks to Senator BROWN for introducing this important legislation, I am proud to be a cosponsor along with many of my colleagues. It has also been 285 days, as Senator MANCHIN said, since Senators MANCHIN, KAINE, WARNER, BROWN, JONES, and CASEY introduced the American Miners Act. So we have two bills in front of

us—one that has been held up now for 285 days and one that has been held up for 83 days. We need to have action.

The American Miners Act secures retired miners' pensions and saves their healthcare benefits. It is past time for Senate Majority Leader MCCONNELL to stop stalling and to take action on behalf of the folks who did nothing more than work their whole lives, created the middle class of this country, and believed their country and believed the companies when they said, if they paid into pensions, they would be there. Hard-working American families have been waiting way too long.

I have always believed that a pension was a promise. It is just plain and simple. It is a promise, and it is a promise that deserves to be kept. People like John, who have worked hard to earn their retirement benefits, shouldn't have to worry about paying their power bills, putting food on their tables, or keeping their homes. They should know that their pensions will be there for them—the pensions they paid into all the time they were working. They have earned them over a lifetime of work, and those pensions are promises that need to be kept.

I urge my Republican colleagues to join us in helping to keep that promise for John and for the hard-working Americans like him. We could do this very quickly this week if we would come together and have a sense of urgency about what is affecting folks who have worked hard all of their lives, who are now retired, and who just need to know that those pensions are going to be there for themselves and their families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 27

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from the further consideration of S. 27, the American Miners Act of 2019; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, let me give a short explanation.

The issues facing miners' pension plans are of critical importance, but I have to tell my colleagues that so are the issues that face a large number of multiemployer plans, and one of the biggest that is of concern is the Central States Pension Plan.

Since last year, the Committee on Finance has been working on a bipartisan basis to address the issues that face the multiemployer system. We are nearing the completion of a comprehensive proposal that will include

financial assistance to the critical and declining multiemployer pension plans and will provide long-term solvency to these plans and to the longer term solvency of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, or, as we know it around here, the PBGC. That proposal will include financial relief for miners and mining companies because the situation with the miners' pensions should be handled in the context of these broader, multiemployer plan reforms.

The Senator from West Virginia is a person with whom I work very often and like personally, but I must object to this and take the course of action of dealing with this in a larger context rather than just for miners' pensions, so I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, if I could respond briefly to the Senator from Iowa, the reason for my request, as far as its being urgent, is that we are on the cusp of having one major coal company go bankrupt. As we speak right now, it is out there trying to restructure, but if it declares bankruptcy, our timetable on our miners' pensions moves from 2022 to 2020. If the miners go down first, it will create a whole tumbling effect with the others. This one can keep us from going into insolvency with the PBGC. All we are trying to do is to prevent that from happening because this is going to move very quickly, unfortunately, if this one large coal company goes bankrupt.

That is why I brought it to the floor today, sir, with all due respect.

I hope the Senator and I will talk some more about this and that he will understand the gravity of what we are dealing with because it is really concerning to me right now.

I thank the Senator.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I heard what my friend said. I still stick by what I told him, which is that we are working on a plan to deal with multiemployers in many different situations of which the Senator's is a very important part.

Mr. MANCHIN. I respect that, sir.

I look forward to working with the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

PENSIONS

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise on behalf of nearly 25,000 workers and retirees in Wisconsin who have paid into the Central States Pension Fund.

It has been 3½ years since the Treasury Department denied an application by the Central States Pension Fund to slash pensions that had already been earned by thousands of plan members. In that time, retirees have organized at home. They have called on their Members of Congress. They have also come to Washington countless times—all to remind us of the promises they were made when they earned their pensions and to fight for a solution to this looming crisis.

I have been proud to work side by side with Wisconsin workers and retirees and with Senator BROWN to introduce the Butch Lewis Act. This legislation will put failing multiemployer pension plans, including Central States, back on solid ground, and it does so without cutting the pensions retirees have earned.

(The remarks of Ms. BALDWIN pertaining to the introduction of S. 2598 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. BALDWIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today as well to talk about pensions, as so many of my colleagues have been—and not just talking about but acting to advance legislation with regard to pensions.

As we have heard today—and we will keep saying this because it bears repeating—pensions are a promise. They are a promise of a secure retirement. When a worker enters into that promise with a company, when the Federal Government is involved, we have to make sure we keep the promise to workers, just as we did a couple of years ago, after a lot of hard work, to make sure healthcare was there for coal miners who were retired.

Pensions are an issue that both Houses of Congress have a responsibility to act on.

The House passed the Butch Lewis Act 3 months ago, but like a lot of legislation that has come from the House, it is sitting in the Senate day after day, week after week and in this case 3 months—3 months—since passage in the House. It is time for the U.S. Senate to have a vote on the Butch Lewis Act.

In Pennsylvania, and I know this is true of several other States, we are talking about coal miners, teamsters, bakery and confectionary workers who, through no fault of their own, are seeing their hard-earned pensions threatened. Failure to act could result in devastating economic consequences across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and across our Nation.

Just think about it this way, in terms of Pennsylvania: One estimate has it that over 60,000 pensions—60,000—including 11,831 coal miners, 21,460 teamsters as part of that larger number—could be at risk.

Despite the challenges ahead, the good news is, we have bipartisan legislation that I mentioned a moment ago, the Butch Lewis Act, which passed the House 3 months ago.

Senator BROWN of Ohio and others have worked hard to make sure this effort on pensions is in front of the agenda in the Senate.

The Butch Lewis Act will create a loan program for troubled pensions. It is a commonsense solution that brings the public sector and the private sector together to address this looming crisis for workers.

We must also pass legislation so we can address the coal miners' healthcare and coal miners' pension crises. Senator MANCHIN from West Virginia has shown great leadership in this process over many years.

We also owe thanks to the Members of the U.S. Senate Democratic caucus. Few, if any, have coal miners in their States, but because of a concerted effort in the Democratic caucus, we have made coal miners and their healthcare and retirements and their pensions a priority. Those Democratic Senators stood with Senators like me from States that have a large number of retired coal miners because it is the right thing to do. Those Democratic Senators know it is the right thing to do. Some Republican Senators do as well.

It is the right thing to do because, as I started with, pensions are a promise, and we have to make sure we keep our promise to those workers.

Thousands of Pennsylvania families are counting on us, and many more thousands of American families across the board outside of Pennsylvania are counting on us to keep our promise on pensions and to make sure we continue to fight until that promise is kept to our workers and to their families.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MCSALLY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### 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 bill clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Barbara McConnell Barrett, of Arizona, to be Secretary of the Air Force.

Mitch McConnell, Martha McSally, Rick Scott, John Thune, Mike Crapo, Lamar Alexander, Johnny Isakson, John Cornyn, Roy Blunt, Roger F. Wicker, John Hoeven, Mike Rounds, Kevin Cramer, Steve Daines, John Boozman, Cindy Hyde-Smith, James E. Risch.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that the nomination of Barbara McConnell Barrett, of Arizona, to be Secretary of the Air Force, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER).

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 Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARNER), and the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO), are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 84, nays 7, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 314 Ex.]

#### YEAS—84

Baldwin	Graham	Portman
Barrasso	Grassley	Reed
Blackburn	Hassan	Risch
Blunt	Hawley	Roberts
Boozman	Heinrich	Romney
Braun	Hoeben	Rosen
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Burr	Inhofe	Rubio
Cantwell	Isakson	Sasse
Capito	Johnson	Schatz
Cardin	Jones	Schumer
Carper	Kaine	Scott (FL)
Casey	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	King	Shaheen
Collins	Lankford	Shelby
Cornyn	Leahy	Sinema
Cortez Masto	Lee	Stabenow
Cotton	Manchin	Sullivan
Cramer	McConnell	Tester
Crapo	McSally	Thune
Cruz	Menendez	Tillis
Daines	Moran	Toomey
Durbin	Murkowski	Udall
Enzi	Murphy	Van Hollen
Ernst	Murray	Warner
Feinstein	Paul	Whitehouse
Fischer	Perdue	Wicker
Gardner	Peters	Young

#### NAYS—7

Blumenthal	Markey	Wyden
Duckworth	Merkley	
Gillibrand	Smith	

#### NOT VOTING—9

Alexander	Coons	Klobuchar
Bennet	Harris	Sanders
Booker	Hirono	Warren

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 84, and the nays are 7.

The motion is agreed to.

The majority leader.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture motions for the Volk, Eskridge, Novak, and Kovner nominations ripen at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, October 16; I further ask that notwithstanding rule XXII, that at 4:15 p.m. tomorrow, all postcloture time on the Barrett, Volk, Eskridge, Novak, and Kovner nominations be considered expired; finally, I ask that if any of the nominations are confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

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

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

## MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

## TRIBUTE TO DAVE ADKISSON

Mr. McDONNELL. Madam President, it is my pleasure today to salute a transformative leader in my home State of Kentucky, Dave Adkisson. At the end of October, Dave will retire as the president and CEO of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, ending nearly 15 years of representing our Commonwealth's employers and signature industries. His talent for advocacy and consensus-building have benefited Kentucky, and I would like to thank him for his many achievements for our State.

Dave began his career at his hometown chamber of commerce in Owensboro, KY. His creativity and successful management won him a lot of fans early on, and he was elected the mayor of Owensboro at the age of 34. Championing several development projects and attracting new businesses to the city, Dave was reelected to a second term without opposition.

Leaving public service, Dave accepted an offer to lead the Birmingham, Alabama, Chamber. The career move took Dave's talents out of Kentucky, but he wouldn't be gone for long. He returned home and began his current role leading the statewide chamber. At the helm of our Commonwealth's largest business association, Dave has grown the organization and expanded its reach. Now, it represents more than 3,800 businesses in Kentucky.

As the leader of the Kentucky Chamber, Dave has made a positive and lasting impact on the public policies enacted both in Frankfort and in Washington. His organization helped lead the charge to pass a right-to-work law in Kentucky, giving workers more freedom over their paychecks and drawing new investment into the Bluegrass State. Dave was also a key ally in our drive to pass comprehensive Federal tax reform and cut burdensome regulations. Kentucky's strong economy is a result, in part, of Dave's leadership.

He has also been recognized nationally among his peers for his important work. In 2017, the Kentucky Chamber was named the top chamber in the country, and Dave has lent his expertise to several national business associations. To foster future innovators, Dave cofounded Leadership Kentucky, a highly selective program to equip prominent Kentuckians with the skills to excel. It is just one example in a long list of contributions Dave has made to improve our State's bright future.

As Dave leaves the Kentucky Chamber, I am glad to know he will continue leading various projects around the Commonwealth. I am sure our communities will continue to benefit from his talent and guiding hand. I am also reassured to know that, while Dave is spending some well-deserved time with his wife Bonnie and their family, the Kentucky Chamber will be in the capable hands of its new president, Ashli Watts. A seasoned advocacy veteran, Ashli can build upon the years of success and help the Kentucky Chamber continue to be a strong voice for our state's job creators.

So, Mr. President, I would like to thank Dave for his years of leadership in Kentucky. As an elected official and a public policy advocate he has created a legacy of accomplishment that will be enjoyed for years to come. It is a privilege to pay tribute to my friend today, and I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in honoring Dave Adkisson and wishing him a fulfilling retirement.

## NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, during National Hispanic Heritage Month, we are called to honor the contributions of a critical community—that of Hispanic Americans. Now accounting for 60 million individuals in the United States, these men and women are an essential pillar of our society. Although this group has grown significantly in recent decades, individuals of Hispanic descent and culture have been with our Nation since its very founding.

Hispanic identity is a complex concept, at least with respect to how many in the United States traditionally understand race and ethnicity. The word "Hispanic" stems from "Hispania," the Latin name for the ancient Roman colonies on the Iberian Peninsula that also serves as the origin for the modern state of España, or Spain. It was there that the Spanish or Castilian language, culture, and people developed out of the convergence of Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Celts, Basques, Visigoths and Arabs, in addition to Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

The story does not end there. Along the hallowed walls of the U.S. Capitol Rotunda are two paintings by John Vanderlyn depicting key historical scenes. In 1492, the Spanish Catholic Monarchs King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella agreed to sponsor the journey of Christopher Columbus in search of a passage to the East Indies. Columbus failed at this goal, but, as the Landing of Columbus illustrates, he did land in the island now named San Salvador in the Bahamas. This voyage prompted the Spanish exploration and colonization of the Americas, including North America, reaching as far as Mississippi in 1541, as depicted by William Henry Powell's Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto, and even deep into the Pacific Northwest.

Even then, however, we are still missing other key elements of the story. The Spanish were not alone. They encountered vast empires, the Aztecs and the Incas, in addition to hundreds of other peoples, from the Mapuche in Argentina to the Maya in Guatemala. Colonization was a bloody process that uprooted and killed millions of indigenous people. Moreover, the Spanish brought millions of Africans to the Americas as part of the Atlantic slave trade. Men, women, and children had to struggle in cruel and terrible conditions as the property of others. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the indigenous and African communities have helped make the Hispanic community what it is today, whether it's in culture, art, music, food, language, or even the genetic makeup of the people themselves. Significant portions of the Hispanic community can trace their descent to these two groups—at least in part, if not entirely.

The exploration and colonization that would lead to the creation of the Hispanic world in the Americas would, in turn, set the stage for English to do the same later, beginning with the first permanent settlement in Jamestown, VA, in 1607. Eventually, these English colonies would sever themselves from the British Empire and form the United States of America. But Spanish colonies would continue to influence our Nation throughout our history. Multiple territories, such as Florida, Texas, California, and Puerto Rico, became integral parts of our country. Others, inspired by the principles of the Enlightenment and the examples of the American and French Revolutions, became their own independent countries. They have since been our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere and some of our most critical partners in trade, security, and championing the virtues of democracy.

Congress established National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15 in recognition of the pivotal contributions and legacy of this community that traces its roots to Spain, Mexico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, and further beyond. Millions, such as the Hispanos of New Mexico and the Tejanos of Texas, are the descendants of settlers who have been on these lands for centuries. Starting in the twentieth century, millions of individuals from across the Hispanic world have come to our Nation as immigrants. Since 2000, the Hispanic population in Maryland has more than doubled, now accounting for half a million people, or nearly 10 percent of all Marylanders. Our State is home to a diverse community of individuals with origins from across the Hispanic world, with sizeable populations of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Peruvians.

Yet we must recognize that this community faces distinct challenges. Instability continues to hamper the abilities