

NOT VOTING—8

Bennet	Harris	Sanders
Booker	Isakson	Warren
Burr	Klobuchar	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 41. The motion is agreed to.

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 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 Jennifer Philpott Wilson, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

Mitch McConnell, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kevin Cramer, John Hoeven, Rob Portman, Dan Sullivan, Chuck Grassley, Richard Burr, John Thune, Roy Blunt.

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 Jennifer Philpott Wilson, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, shall be brought to a close?

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 North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

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 Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 89, nays 3, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 347 Ex.]

YEAS—89

Alexander	Cornyn	Hawley
Baldwin	Cortez Masto	Heinrich
Barrasso	Cotton	Hoeven
Blackburn	Cramer	Hyde-Smith
Blumenthal	Crapo	Inhofe
Blunt	Cruz	Johnson
Boozman	Daines	Jones
Braun	Duckworth	Kaine
Brown	Durbin	Kennedy
Cantwell	Enzi	King
Capito	Ernst	Lankford
Cardin	Feinstein	Leahy
Carper	Fischer	Lee
Casey	Gardner	Manchin
Cassidy	Graham	McConnell
Collins	Grassley	McSally
Coons	Hassan	Menendez

Merkley	Rosen	Sullivan
Moran	Rounds	Tester
Murkowski	Rubio	Thune
Murphy	Sasse	Tillis
Murray	Schatz	Toomey
Paul	Schumer	Udall
Perdue	Scott (FL)	Van Hollen
Peters	Scott (SC)	Warner
Portman	Shaheen	Whitehouse
Reed	Shelby	Wicker
Risch	Sinema	Wyden
Roberts	Smith	Young
Romney	Stabenow	

NAYS—3

Gillibrand	Hirono	Markey
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NOT VOTING—8

Bennet	Harris	Sanders
Booker	Isakson	Warren
Burr	Klobuchar	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 89, the nays are 3. The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Jennifer Philpott Wilson, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

TAX REFORM

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I thought it would be appropriate to come to the floor to celebrate the second anniversary of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

For years I heard from Texans who thought that the Tax Code was simply too complex, too burdensome, and that the Federal Government simply took too much of the fruits of their labor.

They were absolutely correct. Our Tax Code hadn't been reformed in more than three decades, and Republican and Democratic Presidents have long pointed out how America was at a competitive disadvantage relative to other countries because of our Tax Code.

Then, of course, there is the drag of high tax rates on our domestic economy—especially following the great recession during the Obama administration—which made jump-starting the economy a top priority last Congress.

The good news is that we delivered. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act lowered the individual tax rates across the board for every bracket. It increased the standard deduction, doubled the child tax credit, and made tax rates for businesses more competitive. Our goal was to make our Tax Code work for the American people, not the other way around.

I know there are a lot of naysayers who said it wouldn't work. Some of them are still saying that. But I think the results speak for themselves.

First, we saw waves of positive headlines announcing that companies big and small were using their tax savings to provide pay raises, pay bonuses, 401(k) match increases, and other benefits to their employees.

I made a point of asking my constituents in Texas about their experience

under the new Tax Code, and here is some of what I heard:

Tejas Office Products is a Hispanic-owned and operated family business in Houston. They were able to hire more workers in Southeast Texas and expand their business as a result of their tax savings from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

There is American Bank in Corpus Christi. They projected that they could lend an additional \$120 million over the next 5 years in the Coastal Bend, which was absolutely critical, especially following the natural disaster known as Hurricane Harvey.

Then there is Happy State Bank, my favorite name for a bank—Happy State Bank—in Amarillo, which increased wages for more than 600 of its 700 employees. It upped their starting minimum wage and increased their dollar-for-dollar retirement plan match from 6 percent to 7 percent, all of which was good news.

Well, it didn't take long for that good news in these anecdotal cases, for example, to translate into a much improved economy across the board, which helps everybody.

We have seen rapid and consistent job growth with more than 4.3 million new jobs since tax reform became law—4.3 million new jobs.

In September, the national unemployment rate fell to a 50-year low, and Texas unemployment remains below the national average at only 3.4 percent.

The thing I hear the most from employers and job creators in Texas is that they can't find enough qualified workers to fill the good jobs that exist. We have one of the tightest labor markets in decades.

Wages are going up as a result of competition for workers. The poverty rate has hit its lowest level since the turn of the century. American families are seeing more of their hard-earned dollars in each paycheck.

Despite evidence to the contrary, we are still hearing from some of the same old critics who say that tax reform was a flop. The Atlantic, for example, published a story last week with the title "The GOP Tax Cuts Didn't Work." The author claims that tax reform didn't live up to the hype and that because our economy didn't grow as much as some of the estimates believed it would, consecutive, positive growth is absolutely worthless.

Well, that doesn't make any sense at all—not to mention the fact that economic growth has outpaced even the forecast of the Congressional Budget Office prior to tax reform.

This author also mentions that the Institute for Supply Management—or ISM—manufacturing index dipped in September. But the ISM manufacturing index is a survey of purchasing managers who may be swayed by sentiment as much as actual activity. We have seen this index at a similar level before, and the economy continued to grow.

In addition, the critic in this article points to declining exports as a factor in this, despite the fact that our trade deficit fell 4.7 percent in September.

The critics still refuse to admit the connection between increased consumer spending and Americans bringing home more in each paycheck. In other words, they are trying to cherry-pick the evidence and ignore any evidence that the American people have benefited from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

In fact, the critics—who I think are more concerned about an agenda than they are the economy or the welfare of the working American family—continue to try to paint a picture of doom and gloom of our Nation's economy to further that political agenda.

It was not that long ago when some were even highlighting that tax refunds were reduced because of tax reform. It is a bogus measurement of tax relief. We know that at the end of the day, the data showed the average refund check was not that different from the previous year. Wouldn't you want your tax refund to be lower because you were simply paying less withholding each month? That is an interest-free loan to the Federal Government.

Well, while we seem to have moved beyond that argument, we are now on to the next one. Our Democratic colleagues point out that some companies are using their savings for stock buybacks and try to portray this as a corporate blood thirst, claiming it hurts workers in the economy. But by repurchasing their own shares, companies are reinvesting in themselves and their shareholders. Many times, this is teachers or police officers or other first responders. Interfering with stock buybacks, as some of our friends across the aisle have recommended, would not only hurt our economy, but would do serious damage to the pension and retirement accounts of many working Texans and other Americans.

The message of these partisan critics is: The government can spend your money better and more wisely than you can. But Washington cannot even manage its own books and uses "smoke-and-mirrors" accounting measures that would make even Bernie Madoff blush. But that is only the start of the concerning proposals that we have heard from the folks on the left. Our colleague from Massachusetts said if she wins the Presidency, she will soak the American taxpayer even more in an attempt to fund her completely unworkable healthcare proposal.

The differences are pretty stark in the approach: pro-growth, job-creating, economy-growing policies or Big Government, even socialist policies. Those seem to be the two most obvious choices. I know what camp I am in, and I know what camp that Texans are in on this topic.

This constant effort to belittle the progress we have made because of tax reform reminds me of when NANCY

PELOSI compared the savings of the American people under tax reform to "crumbs." She called them "crumbs."

One Texan named Mark told me that his take-home pay increased \$302 a month. That may be crumbs to NANCY PELOSI, but Mark said it would cover his cable, his internet, and his auto insurance bills. He doesn't consider that crumbs.

Another gentleman named Gilbert told me that he and his wife are retired and living on pensions. When they saw a decrease in their Federal tax deduction that allows them to bring home an additional \$400 a month, they said at first they thought it was a mistake, until they learned it was true and, good news, \$400 a month more.

A retired Air Force colonel from Brownsville named David told me that the benefit seems like more than "crumbs" to him.

But I have no doubt that here in this hyper-politicized environment of Washington, DC, that pundits and folks on the left will continue to try to criticize tax reform and belittle the progress that we have made, but those Texans who are reaping the benefits of this law every day are proof positive that they are wrong and that the law is working as we intended.

Despite what I hear from folks on the left, this is an incredible time for our economy. We have made taxes simpler, fairer, and lower for hard-working American families. And we will keep working to remove the regulatory burdens that will help unleash the power of the free market. For more than 150 years, we have been the world's largest economy, and because of pro-growth policies like tax reform, that will only continue to get better.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Iowa.

VETERANS DAY

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, having worn our great Nation's colors in Operation Iraqi Freedom, veterans hold a special place in my heart. Some of my favorite moments in Iowa are centered on honoring our veterans and their families with the medals and the recognition they have earned. Oftentimes, these humble heroes don't want to step forward and receive the honor they are due.

Glenn McDole is a great example of this. Glenn served in World War II and faced some very, very dark days, being only 1 of the 11, out of a total of 150, who survived the Palawan massacre. Glenn was captured in 1941, and he came home to Iowa in 1945. It wasn't until the early 1980s that he started speaking about his military experience.

When he returned home from the war, he didn't skip a beat in his service. Glenn quickly joined the Iowa State Patrol and then the Polk County Sheriff's Office. Glenn lived a very full

life of service. Yet his heroic actions in uniform would go unnoticed for so many years.

I am so grateful that his family got in touch with my office, and we were able to track down the more than 13 medals that he should have received for his service. Presenting the medals to his family earlier this year in my office in Des Moines was truly a beautiful moment.

The medals presented to Glenn's family—and the number of other veterans and families across Iowa who have received these well-deserved recognitions—represent duty, honor, and sacrifice. It is the heroic stories of these very veterans, like Glenn, that truly inspire me to keep fighting for our veterans day in and day out.

As someone who commanded men and women overseas during Operation Iraqi Freedom and then served as the battalion commander of the largest battalion in the Iowa Army National Guard, I have a deep connection and appreciation for our veterans.

Just this past weekend, as I was wrapping up my 99-county tour in Iowa, I was able to spend some time with more of those Iowa veterans at my veterans' resource fair. We were sharing stories about those hard times. We were laughing about the good times. We talked about concerns they have with the VA and making sure they are getting the quality of care they have earned. We talked about the work we have done in the Senate to improve their well-being.

In just the past few years, under the Trump administration, we have been able to expand access to services through legislation like the VA MISSION Act, a bipartisan bill that I proudly helped to get signed into law. This important bill included a number of my priorities, like allowing qualified VA health providers to practice telemedicine across State lines and veterans to receive their care through telemedicine, including vital mental healthcare treatment, and doing it from the comfort of their own home.

President Trump just signed another one of my bills into law, the HAVEN Act, which protects the economic security and well-being of veterans and their families who rely on disability benefits and may be experiencing financial hardship.

I continue to press the VA to take a hard look at their hiring practices and to make sure the people treating and providing care to our veterans have a record of quality care, specifically by introducing the bipartisan Ensuring Quality Care for Our Veterans Act.

The legislation ensures that the VA is absolutely held accountable for how they help care for their veterans, and I am continuing to press them on that issue. We must work tirelessly to restore hope in the institutions that have asked so much of our Nation's heroes, plain and simple. Veterans must have reliable, quality mental and physical healthcare. There is no other option.

Folks, as we take a moment to reflect on the work we have done and continue to do in Congress on behalf of these men and women, we should also pause, as we do every year on Veterans Day, to simply honor their service and the sacrifices they have made for our country and for our freedom.

Serving in the military provided me some of the best years, the best friends, the best experiences, and the best memories of my life.

Each year, Veterans Day serves as a stark reminder of the daily sacrifice made by those who have served this country bravely and selflessly.

Veterans in Iowa and across our Nation, you have my support and my deepest gratitude today and every day of the year.

When men and women sacrifice time with their families and give up holidays, comfort, and their livelihoods to protect our Nation and defend the freedoms we often take for granted, we must fulfill our commitment to caring for them when they return home.

To all of my fellow veterans, may God bless you and keep you.

To their families, I thank you so much for standing behind your loved ones in our country's time of need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, first of all, I want to say how much I appreciate Senator ERNST. When she talks about veterans, she talks about her own experience but also the veterans she has served with and sees every day. This goes to the heart of her great dedication to the people who are currently serving.

Veterans Day is a day that we come to celebrate every year. It is a national holiday, but in so many ways, it is uniquely a local holiday. Events across Missouri and across all of our States are dramatically different based on where you are and the way that community, over time or maybe on a special occasion, has decided this is going to be the way they are uniquely going to celebrate Veterans Day. These ceremonies often include gestures of respect that are repeated over and over again, and that is exactly what you should do with respect. Respect doesn't wear out. We lay wreaths. We play music. We pledge to the flag, I think in many unique ways on Veterans Day, as we think about those who have been willing to defend that flag at all costs. There may be a 21-gun salute. There may be a parade.

There are lots of different ways we celebrate, and every community honors its own neighbors in a different way. If you grew up in that community and you look at the wall with the community members' names or you look at the register at the courthouse with the names of those who gave their lives in one of our wars, you recognize those names. They are the last names of the people you went to school with. They are the last names of the people you

grew up alongside of. They are often the names of families who still live in that community.

I was thinking about this, and I thought about a name that was given to one of my good friends. His middle name was after his uncle who had died in World War II, and he didn't particularly like his middle name. One day, he said to my dad: "I hate that name. I don't like my middle name. I wish it wasn't my middle name." What he didn't know was that my dad was on his uncle's basketball team. My dad quickly pointed that out. He said: "Your uncle was one of the finest young men I ever knew, and he never got to be an older man because he gave his life in World War II." When my friend was born 15 years later, his family wanted to remember the name of that person who served and made the ultimate sacrifice. Those are the kinds of things we think about in communities on Veterans Day.

I will be going to several events—one at Camdenton High School in Camdenton, MO. They will be recognizing 32 veterans at that event. They will also be recognizing the new Junior ROTC Program at the high school. When talking about local character, that is sort of what we are talking about. In Camdenton, they are honoring not only those who served and sacrificed previously but also a new generation that is stepping up and willing to serve among those being recognized on Veterans Day.

I am going to go to a ceremony in Wright County, which is just a little bit down the road, just an hour and 15 minutes away from Camdenton. In that ceremony, they are dedicating a new Wright County Patriots Memorial in Hartville. The memorial honors people from the area who served and died in every conflict from the Civil War to the War on Terror. The organizers have made it clear that this is a day of celebration and honor, not of sorrow. It is a day to celebrate those who served. Some got their names on the wall. Others didn't give their lives in conflict but were willing to put on the uniform and go through the training and in many cases into dangerous situations. Maybe they didn't have to make the ultimate sacrifice, but on Veterans Day, we recognize veterans who were willing to serve. That is exactly what Veterans Day should be.

This will be the 100th anniversary of the first Veterans Day, which was originally called Armistice Day. It was Armistice Day because it commemorated the end of World War I. World War I was called The Great War, and it was called The War to End All Wars. That is not what happened, but that is what people thought, in the hours after World War I, might have happened. It was so horrible, so terrible, and so many lives were lost that they thought it might be the war to end all wars. It ended on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, 100 years ago.

The United States lost 116,000 people in the relatively short time we were in

that war. We got in the war late. We made a difference in the war, but 116,000 people were lost in that period of time, in that truly grueling battle in World War I. Another 200,000 U.S. troops were wounded in that war.

The first Veterans Day 1 year later was not about what was lost; it was a celebration of what was won. It began with the end of the war. It reaffirmed a commitment to democracy. On that first holiday 100 years ago, President Wilson said that "the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for victory." We remember the heroism of those who were lost and all who were willing to serve, and, as on that first anniversary of the end of World War I, we remember the victory that was achieved. We use this occasion to honor and remember our veterans with pride and gratitude.

I am glad we are continuing to build new memorials, like the one in Wright County. I am glad we continue to honor people who are willing to serve, like the recognition of the new JROTC Program at Camdenton High School.

A lot of things have changed in the 100 years since the end of World War I, but the point is, Veterans Day hasn't changed. This is not something Americans used to do; this is something we continue to do, and, as Senator ERNST said so well, it is something we need to do every day.

Veterans Day is a special day of recognition, but we need to ensure that veterans have what they need while they are serving, and once they become veterans, we need to make sure they have everything they were promised and then some, including every access to healthcare that they were promised.

I think we have successfully expanded not only the kind of healthcare people can get but also the way they can get their healthcare, respect and appreciation, remembrance of what they did and how that might have led to a behavioral health challenge or a health challenge of some other kind, and a country willing to step up for those who were willing to step up for us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, in August I had the honor of traveling to a tiny town, to a small diner in Auburn, IN. The purpose of my visit was to present a military service medal that was nearly 75 years in the making. Over the last few months, I have had a lot of opportunities to think about those moments in Sandra D's Cafe and what they have meant to me. As we approach Veterans Day, I would like to share a few of those lessons.

I served in the military for 10 years, and I saw firsthand the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform. As an elected representative, I have had further opportunity to visit veterans who served in conflict zones and families who made incredible sacrifices to

keep us all free. I learned just how much a sacrifice we truly ask of our troops and their families.

In the Marine Corps, we have a motto: “Semper Fidelis.” Rarely do we tell folks what it means. It means “always faithful”—faithful to our Nation and faithful to all those who protect it, faithful to all those who serve in peacetime and are prepared to protect it. It is why I wear this memorial bracelet around my wrist. The folks back home know I wear it. I remind them of it often because it is important. This bracelet honors LCpl Alec Terwiske. He was a fellow U.S. marine from a small town in Dubois, IN, in southern Indiana. On September 3, 2012, he was tragically killed—for all of us—in Afghanistan.

His mom, Sandy, has become a close friend. She asked me to wear this bracelet to honor his memory, and I do so. I do so proudly every day to remember Alec and Sandy and the rest of their family and also to remember all those men and women who love our country and what it stands for so much that they are prepared, if necessary, when called to do so, to put their lives on the line for all of us. It takes a special person to take up arms in defense of our country. It takes a belief and cause much greater than ourselves. That cause is, in fact, what America is all about. It is that very belief that makes me think back to that cafe in Auburn.

Sandra D’s father, Robert Egli, was a World War II veteran who survived the war. He lived a long and happy life back home in Indiana and didn’t say much about his military service. In fact, when I showed up, Sandra didn’t know much about the story. I did a little personal internet research in the car on the way there to deliver her father’s missing Bronze Star, and what I found out was very interesting.

It was World War II, in the Philippines, the Pacific theater. Robert’s unit was involved in a battle that saved the lives of 511 American prisoners of war. His actions and those of the other American GIs with him allowed those Americans to return home, to marry their sweethearts, to start a family, and to pursue the American dream.

Now, think about it. This is the beauty and the magic of the gift that so many of our men and women in uniform have given or are prepared to give. Because of the sacrifice of Robert Egli, there are hundreds of Americans who have had children and grandchildren who are now alive today. As a result of his beautiful act of courage, his selfless act of service on behalf of all of us, his patriotism, his sacrifice, maybe tens of thousands of people across America are alive.

For these reasons and many, many more, we must never stop working to ensure that our veterans receive the respect they deserve. That includes ensuring that our veterans receive the care they are due after they are back, safe and secure, at home.

The Senate has already taken up and passed many pieces of nonpartisan legislation—commonsense legislation which I cosponsored and was proud to see become law that will improve the lives of our veterans.

The VA MISSION Act is perhaps the most notable and ambitious effort where we have all come together to support our veterans. This law has already dramatically improved the way veterans receive their healthcare. We have also taken steps to speed up the appeals process for veterans through the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act. No one should ever have to wait years or, perhaps even in the worst instance, pass away, waiting on their benefits. We made significant improvement with respect to that process.

We improved the way our veterans are cared for in nursing homes, and we worked together to provide urgently needed support for veterans who may be contemplating suicide. This year, I have introduced another piece of legislation, working with TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a wounded warrior herself and distinguished Member on the other side of the aisle. We introduced the VETS Safe Travel Act to provide TSA Precheck benefits for those veterans who have been severely wounded on the battlefield. This VETS Safe Travel Act would help 70,000 amputees, 100,000 paralyzed veterans, and 130,000 blind veterans who are currently subjected to a rigorous and demeaning screening process when traveling. Unfortunately, the legislation has, at least so far, been languishing in the House of Representatives, and its delay, of course, means veterans in need will be left waiting. I would really hope that before the House takes another recess week, they can take up and pass this important legislation. I think our veterans have more than earned it.

Working together, we made significant strides for our veterans in recent years, but of course we must always keep striving to do more. It was George Washington, a veteran himself, of course, who once said:

The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation.

Let’s treat them well. Let’s appreciate them fully this Veterans Day and every day. I encourage you to remember your neighbors, the servicemembers in your State, and servicemembers around the country and deployed around the world. I encourage you to think of all those people before and those still with us who are proud to call themselves veterans of our military.

May God bless our veterans. May God continue to bless America.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, as you know, this coming Monday, November

11, is Veterans Day. I have heard my colleagues pay tribute to veterans in their own special way, and I wanted to be a part of that group today to offer a mighty thank-you to our men and women who serve.

I stand before you to honor the brave men and women of the U.S. armed services, past and present, who have stood up to protect us and our freedoms that we hold so dear.

Veterans Day, to me, is a day to reflect on the sacrifices made by all of those who served. It is a time to say thank you. It is a time to pause and think about the veterans themselves and their families. It is also a time for younger people, and I am talking elementary-aged students, to really see the pride and the commitment our veterans over time have had. Whether you are going to your hometown parade or going to a cemetery ceremony or just talking about it within your own home, throughout America’s history, our military has been regarded as the greatest in the world, and it sure is. Our military would not be what it is without the men and women of our All-Volunteer Force.

I am a daughter of a World War II veteran. I grew up hearing smidgeons of his stories off and on the battlefield, and I have always been in awe of those who served. He was very proud of his service in World War II. November 20, 1944, my father, SSG Arch A. Moore, Jr., from Moundsville, WV, was serving somewhere on the Belgium-German line when he was shot in the face, and he was left for dead on the battlefield for 2 days. He talked about it was in a beet field. I remember him saying it was in a beet field. I didn’t like beets, and now I knew why I really didn’t like beets. He also talked about how he was equipped with some painkiller that he could put on his leg to sort of ease the pain as he lay there hoping somebody would come and get him. That was the end of his service on the battlefield. He was taken and miraculously had a great recovery after probably a year of recovery over in England.

For his actions on the battlefield, he received the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Combat Infantryman Badge, and the European Theater of Operations Ribbon with three battle stars. Like my father, so many of the veterans of World War II faced a harsh reality in this conflict. This year marks the 75th anniversary of two of World War II’s most notable battles: D-Day and Battle of the Bulge. Battle of the Bulge is going to be in December next month. Actually, my dad’s platoon went on to fight in the Battle of the Bulge, and only three of his platoon survived.

D-Day is known as the turning point in the war because those brave soldiers pushed their way through German forces to take back Normandy. If anybody wants to see what a sacrifice our country made in World War II, and more for young people to see, I would recommend going to the cemetery in Normandy and seeing those white

markers of a very young American force. While there were many casualties, the United States and our allies prevailed and managed to change the direction of the war at the same time.

As I said, next month we will remember the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. Many Americans lost their lives fending off the German offensive, but we were eventually victorious, which paved the way to the end of the war 5 months later.

West Virginia is also home to one of the last remaining Medal of Honor recipients from World War II, and that is our own Hershel “Woody” Williams. He turned 96 last month. He travels the country talking about veterans and love of country. I ran the Marine Marathon 2 weeks ago in honor of all marines, but I thought about Woody as a marine. I say I ran my first marathon—probably my last—but I thought about Woody as he valiantly fought in the battle of Iwo Jima and rightfully earned the military’s most prestigious medals for his actions during the war. Anecdotally, I think he will be leading the parade in New York City on Veterans Day.

With the growing age of this Nation’s World War II veterans, I encourage our youth to take the time to listen to the stories of heroism from our “greatest generation.” Without their valiant actions and dedication to preserving our freedoms, this country would not be what it is today.

We also must honor all of our veterans from all our eras. Whether it is World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, the selfless actions of our U.S. soldiers must not go unrecognized. They put their lives on the line to afford us the opportunity to live in the greatest country on Earth. We can have our own religious freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, but all the freedoms we enjoy are because of the folks who went before us who were dedicated and willing to serve.

On Capitol Hill, as we know, there are many divisive issues, but ensuring that our veterans receive the support they have earned through their dedicated service to our country is something we all agree on. Like the gentleman here today, the Senator from North Dakota, I happen to serve on the Appropriations Committee. I am on the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies. It has been our priority to make sure veterans programs receive the funding necessary to best assist our men and women who have served the country.

In recent years, Congress has made great strides in trying to improve the VA system, which can always be improved even more, but the legislation we put forward, the VA MISSION Act, I think, will help and has helped. It improved the VA healthcare system by establishing a permanent veterans community care program and expanding our VA caregiving benefits to vet-

erans from all eras. When they say it is 10 miles as the crow flies in mountainous States like West Virginia, if you are driving in West Virginia, that is not going to take you 10 minutes. That could take you an hour, and that is not because of the traffic. Providing community care to our veterans is important because it allows them to receive the care they need without having to travel these long and sometimes arduous routes.

Our work must not stop here. We must continue to work on legislation that will benefit our veteran community. As a Senator, one of my greatest privileges is to make sure our veterans receive the respect and admiration they have earned throughout their service. This is especially true given that West Virginia has one of the largest per capita populations of veterans in this country. The pride West Virginia veterans have is truly remarkable. After service, these men and women are the bedrock of our communities and make significant contributions to making them better.

Rightfully so, Virginians have a great amount of admiration for those who have served, and it is reflected in our communities. We have a lot of statues, a lot of parks, a lot of commemorative highways, a lot of moments of silence in West Virginia to honor our veterans we have lost and those who have gone before us.

I was marching in the Ripley Veterans Day parade last Veterans Day, and I was overwhelmed by the support a small town would show its veterans. Whether someone has served in combat or assisted with the daily operations of the military, their dedication to defending this country must not be unnoticed.

On Monday, I urge everyone to take a moment to thank a veteran. At the same time, this shouldn’t be limited to just Veterans Day. We should thank our veterans each and every day. It is important that we pay them the respect when the opportunity arises. I really feel good when I am getting on a plane and the announcement is made that our military in uniform are allowed to enter the plane. You know how those crowds get up when it is time to get on the plane. Many times, the crowd will part and, in admiration of our military, welcome that little bit of a head start they get to board the plane. Without great sacrifices and dedication to defending this flag, this country would not be what it is.

I say God bless our veterans. God bless our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise to recognize and thank our veterans and their families. I commend the good Senator from the State of West Virginia. I appreciate her remarks and her incredible support for our veterans. Frankly, I want to mention my admiration for her having just completed

the Marine Corps Marathon. I think that is absolutely remarkable. I know she is an avid runner, but to complete a marathon is no small achievement. Of course, to do it as part of the Marine Marathon is another great way to honor our marvelous and wonderful veterans. My father was in the Marine Corps, so I have a special affinity, of course, because of that as well. I appreciate all of our amazing, wonderful veterans.

I am really honored to join my colleagues. I know the good Senator from Kansas is next. As he chairs our Ag Committee, he and I have had a lot of opportunity to work on agricultural issues. He is also another member of the Marine Corps, and I know he has served with great distinction.

Again, it is a great honor to be here today and to join my colleagues in honoring our phenomenal veterans.

In June, I had the opportunity to join a Senate delegation in Normandy for the 75th anniversary of D-Day. We had the honor of meeting with some of the veterans who had landed on the beaches of Normandy and were again reminded of the tremendous sacrifices that our Nation’s veterans have made to preserve our way of life and keep our Nation free. It really was an honor to meet with some of those veterans and to be there in Normandy on the 75th anniversary. To see where they had landed and then to talk with them about it was an incredible way to relive history and, of course, to honor their incredible sacrifice.

We also recognize that those who serve do not serve alone. We appreciate, too, the sacrifices of their families and their loved ones, who have supported them and our Nation’s veterans in their service, who have done so throughout the history of our country, and who serve today, along with their veteran family members—their husbands or wives or sons or daughters, whoever they may be—who have donned the uniform to serve this great Nation. We honor their service and the service of all those who are in harm’s way today.

While we set aside a day each year to express our gratitude, every day, we are reminded of the dedication of those who have served to protect our freedom and our liberties. Our veterans cannot be thanked enough. Given their service and sacrifice, the least our Nation can do is to uphold its commitment to provide our veterans with the healthcare, benefits, and recognition they have so richly earned.

In the Senate, we have passed landmark legislation, including the VA MISSION Act, to support our veterans and provide them with the care and services they have earned. The VA MISSION Act strengthens the VA’s ability to provide care for our veterans, and when the VA is unable to do so, it gives our veterans more options by allowing them to seek care in their home communities. This has been a top priority for veterans in my State, in the

rural State of North Dakota. Giving veterans more options closer to home for healthcare and long-term care is and must continue to be an absolute priority.

We are also continuing to work with the VA and long-term care providers to ensure that the providers who want to treat veterans are able to do so without undertaking unnecessary burdens. We are helping veterans access long-term care—nursing home care, home-based care—closer to home and near their loved ones.

In the course of their dedicated service, our military members make sacrifices in many ways. This includes injuries both seen and unseen. We owe our veterans the best possible care in treating these wounds. That is why we have been working to improve and strengthen the VA's mental healthcare and suicide prevention programs. This includes expanding access to alternative treatment options, like hyperbaric oxygen therapy, HBOT, for veterans who have not benefited from traditional therapies for post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD.

Additionally, I am a cosponsor of the Improve Well-Being for Veterans Act—legislation introduced by Senator BOOZMAN—that would expand and better coordinate services that are aimed at preventing veteran suicide.

As chairman of Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, I recognize that Native Americans serve in our Nation's Armed Forces in higher numbers than does any other ethnic group. That is why I continue to advance legislation, like our bipartisan Tribal HUD-VASH Act, that supports Native American veterans.

Additionally, we are working to provide our veterans with resources and opportunities to help them continue to utilize the skills they learned in the military as they transition back to civilian life. One example is our effort to help veterans receive training to be commercial pilots.

Last week, the Senate passed its fiscal year 2020 Transportation funding bill with provisions from the American Aviator Act. I introduced the bipartisan legislation with Senator BALDWIN so as to expand commercial pilot training opportunities for our veterans. Our country needs commercial pilots, so it only makes sense that we leverage the skills our veterans learned in the military to help them meet this need. It is good for our country, and it is good for our veterans.

These are just a few examples of our efforts to support our veterans.

Our freedom has been secured by the sweat and sacrifice of the courageous men and women who throughout our history have bravely done what has been needed in order to protect our Nation and our way of life. We honor the courage and sacrifice of this Nation's veterans by ensuring they have the resources and support they need and have earned.

To veterans in my home State of North Dakota and to veterans across

the country, we say thank you, not only on Veterans Day but every day.

May God bless these brave Americans and this great country they serve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, at the end of World War I—the supposed war to end all wars; we all wish that it did—in the 11th hour, in the 11th month on the 11th day, we declared armistice. The war was over. Armistice Day is still recognized, but it is now called Veterans Day.

This coming Monday, on 11/11, as we always do on the 11th day of the 11th month, we will pause as a nation and say thank you to the men and women who serve us in the U.S. military. It is the most moral and the most lethal fighting force the world has ever known, and we are grateful. To the men and women who make up our veterans, those serving Actively, those serving in the Reserves, those serving in our National Guard, and those who have served both at home and abroad, we are grateful for their service.

It has been an absolute privilege to serve our veterans in Oklahoma. There are members of my own family, like my Uncle Robby, who is a marine, and my next-door neighbor, who is in the National Guard. Scattered throughout my family and throughout my own neighborhood, I have a chance to smile and say thank you to folks on a regular basis for what they have done in the past and what they continue to do right now.

Over the past several sessions of Congress, we have worked to help our veterans and to help those who are serving currently. We have passed legislation like the VA MISSION Act, which dramatically increases veterans' care and gives veterans the opportunity to go to different places in order to get care. Now they don't have to drive across my great State to get to a VA center. They can go somewhere closer to home, where it is more convenient for them, rather than go to a VA center. That is a great asset to them and to their families, who have sacrificed over and over again so that their loved ones can serve. They shouldn't have to sacrifice even more now.

This Congress has made major improvements to and has expanded the GI bill. We have improved the onerous disability compensation and appeals process for the VA, which has long been an issue. We have increased the quality of care at the VA, and we have made sure that staff members who work at our VA centers are held to account. By far, the majority of people who serve in our VA centers serve on behalf of our veterans and are passionate and grateful to do that. Yet, for some who cannot get the job done, we shouldn't give our veterans lesser care because of those individuals.

Those are all of the things that have been done just to say thank you. Yet it is interesting to me, the number of

times I have talked to veterans and have said "thank you for your service," and they have responded with something like "it is the least I could do" or "absolutely" or "no thanks necessary" or "it was my honor to do it." This is a group of individuals who knows what it means to serve. We will continue to say thanks to them.

On this Veterans Day, I will pause with a family at a bridge in Oklahoma as the name of the bridge transitions to the Damon Leehan Bridge in remembrance of an Oklahoman who, in 2011, died in Afghanistan while protecting our freedom.

Our veterans don't ask for our thanks, but we can't give them thanks enough for what they and their families have done to keep this great Nation secure.

Thank you to our veterans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, for generations, America has been a beacon of hope and freedom around the world. When confronted with tyranny and evil, America has always overcome. In every generation, patriots have answered the call to service in defense of our country and in defense of freedom and democracy. Their bravery and willingness to serve is a testament to the American and Montanan spirit.

It is my highest honor to serve as a voice for Montana's veterans in the Halls of Congress. You see, Montana has one of the highest veteran populations per capita in the United States. Montana's veterans are what make living in Big Sky Country all the more special.

I know I speak for most Montanans when I say, while growing up, we learned very early on about the importance of service to our country. For me, that lesson was taught by my father. My dad is a marine who served in the 58th Rifle Company out of Billings, MT. He instilled in me the values of hard work, of sacrifice, of service to others, and of humility. I am grateful for his service to our country, and I am proud to live every day with the values that he taught me when I was so young. Those same values that my dad taught me are held by veterans all across Montana.

I am grateful for Montana's veterans. I am grateful to have several veterans serve on my staff both in Montana and in Washington, DC. I thank Denny in Helena, Robin in Great Falls, Jim in Bozeman, and Christy in Washington, DC. They are all Montanans who are also veterans who serve on my team and serve the people of Montana.

We have an extraordinary legacy of service in Montana. We are home to heroes like Medal of Honor recipient Army SSG Travis Atkins, who was honored by President Trump at the White House this year for his ultimate sacrifice in defense of our country. Right now, in Congress, I am working to rename the Bozeman VA healthcare

facility after this great, fallen, Montana hero. Travis and I attended the same high school in Bozeman.

I make it my top priority to hear from all of our veterans across all corners of our State and to learn about the issues they face, such as access to rural healthcare, or to ensure they receive the recognition they deserve. In fact, just last month, I was in Great Falls to help honor veteran Alfred E. Shryer with the Bronze Star Medal for his service in Vietnam. It was recognition that was long overdue—nearly 50 years in the making.

After all our veterans and their families have given to our Nation, it is due time that our country gives them the care, the treatment, and the recognition they have earned. That is why I am taking action. I have introduced a number of bipartisan solutions to help resolve issues that plague our vets, like my bipartisan bill to protect veterans' pensions from scam artists. I have also led a bipartisan effort to ensure that our Blue Water veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange while they served in Vietnam receive the healthcare they deserve. Those who risk it all—those who put their lives on the line in defense of our freedom—deserve the utmost honor, thanks, and care.

To all of our veterans, thank you for your service. Our country is freer and our country is safer because of you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, thank you to my colleagues from West Virginia, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and now the great State of Montana.

The distinguished Senator from Montana is sitting at the desk that was occupied by Conrad Burns, a Senator from Montana who was a private in the U.S. Marine Corps.

I thank the Senator from Montana for his remarks and for his service in this body.

I rise today to speak in support of our Nation's veterans, Veterans Day, which is coming up on Monday, and the 244th—244th—birthday Sunday of our Nation's force in readiness, the U.S. Marine Corps.

I am a marine—the senior marine in the Congress—and my dad was a marine serving in Guam, Kenya, Okinawa, and Iwo Jima. Tough duty.

On this holiday, we remember those who have sacrificed for our freedoms, especially the more than 1 million who have given their lives for our country. Every American should remember these heroes.

As a nation, we are also home to more than 18 million living heroes who have served with distinction in our armed services.

On this Veterans Day, I would especially like to single out a great veteran who has also served with honor and respect in this body—Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON.

JOHN HARDY ISAKSON, born December 28, 1944, just 3 short years after the at-

tack on Pearl Harbor, began his service to our country in the Georgia Air National Guard from 1966 to 1972, leaving the service at the rank of staff sergeant.

He then continued to serve as a member in both the Georgia State Senate and House, as well as the U.S. House of Representatives, before his fellow Georgians sent him to the U.S. Senate.

In 2005, he came back full circle to his military roots, joining the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in 2015, he took over the chairmanship.

Let the record reflect that, as chairman, he has worked tirelessly—tirelessly—to reform veterans' healthcare and benefits, as well as to bring oversight and accountability to the Department.

Under his leadership, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs has passed 57 pieces of legislation that were signed into law—57. You heard that correctly; 57 bills became law.

I think I have had the gavel in four different committees—57? I don't think I have gotten to that yet.

Let me just go through some of the most significant reforms that JOHNNY ISAKSON steered through the Senate that became law: the VA MISSION Act, which puts veterans in charge of their own healthcare; the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, which holds the VA accountable to the veterans it serves; the Harvey W. Colmery—happens to be a Kansan—Veterans Educational Assistance Act, which improves veterans' GI bill benefits; the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, which modernizes the VA's appeal process; and one of the most important, the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, which helps get mental health services to our warfighters who need them the most.

This is only a small portion of his long list of accomplishments, and his committee is not resting on their laurels. As of this morning, they have held 110 hearings, conducted more than 80 oversight visits, and have confirmed 23 Presidential nominations.

In my experience as chairman of a Senate committee—I think three of them, maybe four—you simply can't get this type of work done without help from those across the aisle.

This is just another example of who JOHNNY is as a person and a legislator. He doesn't make promises he can't keep, and he is willing to put partisanship aside in order to get the absolute best care for our Nation's men and women who have served.

In this body, there are those who choose ideology—I understand that—and partisan issues—I understand that as well. But JOHNNY ISAKSON is someone who works with his colleagues to pass legislation benefiting not only our Nation's veterans but every American's pocketbook and daily life.

I have a lot of personal memories when JOHNNY would rope me in to com-

ing to a meeting, a bipartisan meeting, to try to get what we thought was a very important bill done. Sometimes I had some concerns about joining those outfits that he seemed to put together when nobody else could, but I learned pretty quickly that I better go, first, to find out what was going on and then, second, to watch this man carefully craft a bipartisan agreement, working with colleagues, listening to them. When JOHNNY spoke, people usually got to the edge of their chairs and listened. That is how he got it done.

On behalf of the more than 18 million veterans and their families this Veterans Day, we celebrate his leadership and sense of duty to country.

JOHNNY—JOHNNY ISAKSON—thank you for your service. Senators eventually come and go. I do not think we will see the likeness of Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON for years to come.

Semper fi, my dear friend. I love you. We love you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

WHISTLEBLOWERS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before I get into the substance of my remarks on a very serious subject, I want to thank my dear friend from Kansas for his nice words about JOHNNY ISAKSON.

There is no word short of "beloved" that you would affix before JOHNNY ISAKSON's name in terms of this Chamber, and I think that would probably be true for every single Member—certainly the Senator from Kansas and certainly the Senator from New York.

On July 30, 1778, the Continental Congress passed unanimously the following resolution: "Resolved, that it is the duty of all persons in the service of the United States . . . to give the earliest information to Congress or other proper authority of any misconduct, frauds or misdemeanors committed by any officers or persons in the service of these states."

That was in the Continental Congress before our Nation was even formed—a duty of citizens to protect the American people from those in government who might conduct misconduct, fraud, or misdemeanors.

From the earliest days of our Republic, our government has acknowledged the vital role that whistleblowers play in ensuring good governance and rooting out corruption, malfeasance, and self-dealing.

Two nights ago, appallingly, at a political rally, President Trump and a Member of this Chamber, the junior Senator from Kentucky, publicly and explicitly urged the press to disclose the identity of the Federal whistleblower whose complaint triggered an impeachment inquiry in the House of Representatives.

A few days later, the same junior Senator threatened to reveal the identity of the whistleblower himself.

I cannot stress enough how wrong and dangerous—dangerous—these efforts are.

The United States is a nation of laws. Whistleblower laws have existed since the founding of our Republic to protect patriotic Americans who come forward and stand up for our Constitution. We don't get to determine when these laws apply and when they don't. We don't get to decide if the law applies whether you like what the whistleblower said or whether you don't. These are laws. No person—no person—is above the law.

This whistleblower, whose complaint was deemed credible and urgent by a Trump appointee, is protected by these statutes. There is no legal doubt about that. Every single Member of this body—every single one—should stand up and say that it is wrong to disclose his or her identity. That is what my colleague Senator HIRONO will ask us to do in a moment.

Before she does, I want to thank my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who have spoken up in defense of whistleblower protections. Some of my Republican colleagues have spent their careers defending whistleblowers. We need them today. We need these Republican colleagues, who should be here standing up for the protection of whistleblowers.

The threats we have seen over the last few days are so egregious—so egregious—that they demand bipartisan outrage from one end of this Chamber to the other, whether you are a Democrat, Republican, Independent, liberal, moderate, or conservative.

What is happening here is another erosion of the values of this Republic for political expediency. Exposing the whistleblower's identity would endanger their health and safety and that of their families. It would also be a chilling message to future patriots that they do their duty to report wrongdoing at the risk of exposure, retaliation, and retribution.

Why don't we see a single other Republican stand up in favor of this today? We should.

Let's send a message today that the Senate reaffirms our Nation's longstanding tradition of defending whistleblowers. I urge every single Member of the Senate to support it, and I recognize somebody who has been valiant in this fight to protect the duty enshrined by the Continental Congress and the Constitution, my good friend, the Senator from Hawaii.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 408

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, if you work for the Federal Government, you work for the people. You have a duty by law to come forward to report misconduct, fraud, misdemeanors, and other crimes going on in government.

This duty has been on the books since 1778. Why? Because people working in government are in a pretty good position to see when something is not right in their workplace.

We want a government that is doing right by us.

It is not easy for whistleblowers to come forward to report wrongdoing in

government. That is why we have laws that protect a whistleblower from intimidation, discrimination, and retaliation, and laws that protect their identity.

On August 12, a whistleblower—and we don't know whether this was a man or a woman, so for ease of reference, I will refer to the whistleblower as "she"—came forward, as the law required, to file a complaint with the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community.

The complaint alleged that the President was "using the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the 2020 U.S. election."

The inspector general, also as required, determined that the complaint was credible and involved an urgent concern.

The House, on learning of the whistleblower's complaint, began to ask questions. What did the House investigation uncover? That the whistleblower's complaint was right.

Bill Taylor, the top U.S. diplomat in Ukraine; Tim Morrison, the top Russia and Eastern Europe expert on the National Security Council; and others have corroborated the whistleblower's complaint about the President.

Just yesterday, the U.S. Ambassador to the European Union, Gordon Sondland, confirmed that security assistance for Ukraine was dependent on the Ukrainian Government's launching an investigation into the President's political opponents.

Let's face it. What Donald Trump did was wrong. It is wrong for the President of the United States to shake down the Ukrainian President to get dirt on his political rivals in return for almost \$400 million in U.S. military aid to help Ukraine fight Russia. Faced with growing evidence of Donald Trump's wrongdoing, what happens? What happens is a President and his minions attack the whistleblower, suggesting that she was spying and guilty of treason.

Donald Trump has threatened the whistleblower with "Big Consequences"—capital B, capital C—and put her safety at risk with comments such as: "I do not know why a person that defrauds the American public should be protected." Guess what, he wasn't talking about himself.

Donald Trump's devoted rightwing allies have been quick to echo and amplify the President's attacks. The whistleblower's own attorney warned Acting Director of National Intelligence Joseph Maguire that the President's threats are compromising her personal safety. Just last Sunday, Donald Trump said: "There have been stories written about a certain individual, a male, and they say he's the whistleblower . . . if it's him, you guys ought to release the information."

House Minority Leader KEVIN MCCARTHY also insisted that the whistleblower "should come before the committee . . . he needs to answer the questions." While speaking at a Trump

campaign rally, my colleague from Kentucky who has joined me on the floor today, demanded that the media print the name of the whistleblower. Representative JIM JORDAN, one of Donald Trump's fiercest allies, dismissed the whistleblower as biased and called for her identity to be made public.

With his attacks on the whistleblower, Donald Trump has made clear that he will use the full power of his office to bully, intimidate, and threaten anyone who dares to stand up to him or to speak out against him.

Can you imagine what a young career foreign service officer at the State Department might do after seeing the President tell the world that whistleblowers are spies who defraud our government? Do you think that person would risk destroying their career and suffer the wrath of Donald Trump and his fiercest allies and supporters in reporting the President's misconduct?

How about a career employee at the Department of Defense who sees that military aid is being held up to pressure a foreign government to help the President of the United States win reelection? Do you think that Defense Department employee would risk being accused of betraying our country and acting as a spy?

Let's be clear here: The real purpose of these attacks is to scare anyone else who may be thinking of coming forward to stay silent. We see the President, time and time again, through tweets, in interviews, at his rallies, openly attacking anyone who questions or disagrees with him. The chilling effect of what the President is doing cannot be overstated. It totally undercuts our whistleblower laws. These are not normal times. In normal times, we would be protecting whistleblowers. That is what this resolution does.

The resolution I am presenting affirms that if anyone expects public servants to report misconduct, we have a corresponding duty to protect their identity and safeguard them from retaliation, from threats. The whistleblower has done her duty. Now, we need to do ours.

Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 408 introduced earlier today; that the resolution be agreed to; the preamble be agreed to; and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2798

Mr. President, I support whistleblowers, and I do think they have a role to play in keeping government accountable. They should not lose their jobs or be prosecuted because of their willingness to speak, but what we have seen over the last few years is that we have a system that we should continue to refine.

When Edward Snowden exposed the breadth of unconstitutional government spying, that everything you do can be seen and stored by the government without cause, without an individualized order, in secret, in bulk, in defiance of the Fourth Amendment, not one finger was raised by those voices who are so proud now to defend whistleblowers, not one of them stood up for Edward Snowden.

Many, in fact, in Congress condemned him. They wanted to bring him to trial. Senators talked about hanging him from the closest tree, about executing him. People called into question his motives. Hillary Clinton implied that Edward Snowden was a foreign spy. CHUCK SCHUMER, who now has such outrage and defense of the whistleblower statute, lifted not one finger for Edward Snowden. In fact, he called him a coward.

So really I think that the outrage we see here is selective outrage, and it is because they are intent on overturning the election of the people. They are intent on removing Trump from office, no matter what, and they will use whatever means they can to do it.

Interestingly though, despite all of these people calling Edward Snowden a traitor, Congress ended up abolishing the bulk collection program that he exposed. Congress knew that they had done something illegal by collecting all of your metadata, all of your phone call data, without the permission of a judge and that it violated the Fourth Amendment.

They knew that he had probably become the greatest whistleblower of all time; yet where are the voices defending Edward Snowden now? Not one of these people who fake outrage over this whistleblower and President Trump and impeachment—not one of them will stand up for Edward Snowden. They would still put him in jail for life, if they could.

In the end, we did end bulk collection because Edward Snowden bravely came forward and said that the government was lying to us, that James Clapper, now a big President Trump hater, came before the Senate and he lied directly to Senator WYDEN when he said: We are not collecting your data.

Yet where is Edward Snowden in all of this, as these great defenders of the whistleblower statute are here? Not a word for Edward Snowden. Snowden himself said that he didn't have adequate protection to bring his claims internally because he was a government contractor and not an employee and not subject to the whistleblower statute.

Subsequently, Congress fixed that. Now, contractors in the intelligence community can make whistleblower claims. I agree with that. There are also now protections for some other contractors. We should extend and expand the protections, and we should make this protection retroactive to account for people like Snowden.

So the bill I will introduce today will expand the Whistleblower Act, it will

be made retroactive so Edward Snowden can come home to live in his own country. All he did was expose that his government was not obeying the Constitution. If this fake outrage here is really towards whistleblowing, why don't we make it retroactive and defend the most famous whistleblower of all time? That is what my bill would do.

While Snowden's disclosures were in defense of the Fourth Amendment, the Sixth Amendment guarantees an individual the right to face their accuser; yet the House of Representatives has been conducting a secret impeachment inquiry based on secret claims made by a secret whistleblower.

My bill would make clear that the Sixth Amendment is not superseded by statutes and that the President should be afforded the same rights that we all should, to understand the nature of the allegations brought against them and to face their accuser. This is in the Sixth Amendment.

So for all the caterwauling about whistleblower statutes, there is a high law of the land. It is the Constitution. It is the Bill of Rights. The Sixth Amendment says if you are accused of a crime, you get to face your accuser.

In fact, there was a resolution last week placed by 50 members of the Republican Caucus that condemns the process going on in the House. It condemns it because it says specifically, in the resolution signed by 50 Republicans, that the President should get to face his accusers, that he should have counsel and call on witnesses and to understand the basis of the charges against him.

See, here is the thing: The whistleblower should be called because they are making accusations against the President. That is the Sixth Amendment. We don't do away with the Sixth Amendment because we are talking about impeachment or talking about the President. But the whistleblower is also a material witness. The whistleblower is a material witness because he worked for Joe Biden. He worked for Joe Biden when Joe Biden and Hunter Biden were involved in corruption in Ukraine.

This person worked on the Ukraine desk. This person traveled to Ukraine. This person was involved with aid. So when Joe Biden says we are going to deny aid to Ukraine unless you hire a prosecutor that is looking into my son's company that is paying Hunter Biden \$50,000 a month, don't you think we have the right to call these people? Don't you think that Joe Biden should appear? Don't you think that Hunter Biden should appear? Absolutely, the whistleblower should appear because he is an accuser, but also because he is a material witness to the conflict of interest scandal that involves Hunter Biden and Joe Biden.

Fifty Republican Senators signed on to a resolution that says the President should get to face his accusers. My bill, the Whistleblower Act of 2019, would

make that clear, that the Sixth Amendment is not superseded by statutes and that the President should be afforded the right to understand the nature of the allegations brought against him and that the President should get to face his accusers.

Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator modify her request so that, instead, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of my bill, the Whistleblower Act of 2019, S. 2798, introduced earlier today; I further ask 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Does the Senator so modify her request?

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, reserving my right to object.

My colleague's bill was just dropped literally on my lap just now. I certainly have not had a chance to read through the bill, but the last paragraph of this bill—which by the way I think it is called the Whistleblower Protection Act—anyway, the last section of his bill caught my eye, and I will read it to you.

“Section 5. Ensuring Sixth Amendment protections. Congress reaffirms that in the case of criminal proceedings, prosecutions, and impeachment arising from the disclosures of whistleblowers, that the accused has a right to confront his or her accuser in such proceedings and that right is not superseded by the Whistleblower Protection Act.”

So suddenly the Sixth Amendment right for a defendant to confront the accuser is being applied to the impeachment proceeding. It has never been done before. By doing this, the Senator from Kentucky, in my view, is truly undermining the Whistleblower Protection Act. So to call his bill the Whistleblower Protection Act of 2019 is, in my view, laughable.

By the way, in this particular instance we don't need the whistleblower's testimony. The whistleblower's complaint, the substance of her complaint, has been corroborated numerous times. So all this is to send the message out there that all you people who work for the Federal Government, if you see some kind of wrongdoing misdeed going on, don't come forward because expect retribution, expect the President to come after you, expect the President's minions to come after you.

What is the point of having a whistleblower statute which—you know, which is a duty, it imposes a duty on Federal employees to come forward—and at the same time as we impose this duty, we have the good Senator's resolution saying: Yes, come forward, but we are going to out you, subject you to threats, intimidation, retaliation.

This whistleblower's own attorney has said that her safety is in question, so using the Sixth Amendment and

sort of tie it to impeachment proceedings is—I am just flabbergasted.

Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard. Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

I am disappointed that any Senator would come to the floor and find the Bill of Rights laughable. The Sixth Amendment is an important part of our Constitution, and the right to face your accuser is incredibly important. It is disappointing that an actual U.S. Senator would come to the floor and say that it was laughable to apply the Bill of Rights to the President. I am disappointed that it has come to this.

I will hope that Americans would look at this and say, absolutely, the President deserves the same protections that the rest of us deserve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. I think the Senator from Kentucky should listen because I certainly did not find the Sixth Amendment laughable. I found his resolution, calling it the Whistleblower Protection Act, which in fact undermines whistleblower protections, appalling and laughable.

With that, I, once again, object to his request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

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

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

TESTIMONY OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL
ALEXANDER VINDMAN

Mr. CASEY. Thank you, Mr. President.

First, I want to briefly recognize this afternoon the brave public servants who have testified in the House in recent weeks in defense of national security, the rule of law, and our democratic institutions—most recently, LTC Alexander Vindman.

Despite Lieutenant Colonel Vindman's two decades of military service and a Purple Heart for his sacrifice to our country in Iraq, his character has faced brutal attacks from cable news and from some current and former Members of Congress. These comments about him are reprehensible attacks with no basis in fact.

Verbal abuse of Lieutenant Colonel Vindman not only disrespects his integrity and his service but undermines our institutions and ultimately makes our Nation less safe—less safe. So questioning the character, loyalty, or patriotism of Lieutenant Colonel Vindman is an attack on all veterans and is also an attack on our military.

Former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul put it this way in a Washington Post column just last week, and I will quote part of the column:

Such smear tactics are revolting and un-American. Vindman has served our country with honor and distinction, both on and off the battlefield. . . . And he is a patriot—as you would expect from someone with his outstanding resume. . . . The idea that Vindman might have dual loyalties with another nation is preposterous. Vindman was born in the totalitarian Soviet Union, not “the Ukraine.” His family, which is Jewish, fled religious persecution. He is not Soviet or Ukrainian or Ukrainian American: He is simply an American. Using birthplaces or hyphenated adjectives to disparage fellow Americans is always wrong. It is especially so in the case of Lt. Col. Vindman.

That is the op-ed from a distinguished Ambassador.

When I reflect upon Lieutenant Colonel Vindman's service to our country and his integrity, I am reminded of one of the lines—we could use many—from “America the Beautiful”:

Oh, beautiful for patriot dream

That sees beyond the years

That is what he was doing when he testified, just like that was what he was doing when he was serving our Nation in Iraq and when he was wounded in Iraq, and what he has done as a member of our national security team as part of the work he has done in this administration—seeing beyond the years. Part of the dream of a patriot is thinking about the impact of your actions on future generations.

We need to make sure that we are very clear about where we stand on his character, on his commitment to the country, and on his courage in coming forward.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. President, I want to move to the grave question of Syria and what has happened over just the last couple of weeks. I know this is a position held by Senators in both parties, but I oppose President Trump's recent decision to withdraw U.S. Armed Forces from Syria.

Following a phone call with Turkish President Erdogan on October 6, President Trump announced that the United States would be withdrawing U.S. troops from northern Syria. This cleared the way for the Turkish Armed Forces to proceed with an operation—an effort to target Kurdish and Islamic State, or ISIS, fighters in northern Syria. The President's decision is already impacting U.S. national security, as many analysts have predicted.

We have abandoned our Kurdish allies, who have been instrumental in not only retaking territory from ISIS but also in detaining ISIS combatants. We learned last week that they made the most important contribution of critical intelligence, helping U.S. forces locate and eliminate ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

That leads me to the role that Russia plays, especially in the aftermath of the decision the President made about our troops in northern Syria. Following an initial U.S.-brokered ceasefire, Turkish and Russian authorities have agreed to a more permanent status, sharing control of Syria's northern border. Turkish and Russian forces are not only occupying Kurdish-

held areas but also further expanding Russia's role in Syria and committing war crimes against Kurdish civilians, according to the United Nations.

Russia has already occupied U.S. military camps in the region, and Turkish President Erdogan's deepening relationship with Vladimir Putin, as evidenced by Turkey's S-400 missile system, only undercuts U.S. influence in Syria, all but guaranteeing that U.S. interests will not be represented in a future Syrian political settlement.

President Trump's decision serves to benefit Vladimir Putin. Prior to the withdrawal, the United States was Russia's only military equal in Syria, but Russia is now the primary—and, according to some analysts, the sole—power broker in Syria.

In the vacuum left by the United States, Putin will be able to return control of the country to Bashar al-Assad. Also, he will be able to exercise increased control over Turkey, a NATO ally, and also return to its Cold War-era dominance—the Russians, that is—in the Middle East.

I am holding an article, which, from a distance, you can't see the headline. It is from the Washington Post, dated October 16 of this year. It says that in Ukraine and Syria, Trump's moves are helping Putin. It was written by Anne Gearan. Anne Gearan is a respected reporter on national security issues and foreign policy. This article—and I will not go through all of it—catalogs how the Trump administration has allowed Russia to assert dominance globally. I mentioned the headline, but here is some of the text of the article. The first few paragraphs of the article by Anne Gearan say as follows:

Whether by chance or by design, the foreign policy crises involving Syria and Ukraine that have enveloped the White House have a common element. In each case, President Trump has taken action that has had the effect of helping the authoritarian leader of Russia.

Russian forces are now operating between the Turkish and Syrian militaries, helping to fulfill Moscow's main aim of shoring up its alliance with Syria and the Russian military port housed there—an outcome Russian President Vladimir Putin has sought for years.

Trump's actions in Syria and Ukraine add to the list of policy moves and public statements that have boosted Russia during his presidency, whether that was their central purpose or not, confounding critics who have warned that he has taken—

She is referring to our President here—

too soft a stance toward a nation led by a strongman hostile to the United States.

Anne Gearan goes on to describe the long list of President Trump's actions that demonstrate the strange deference to Russia, which has ultimately compromised the furtherance of U.S. national security interests in Syria and beyond.

I also want to make reference to another recent news article. The headline at the top of this New York Times article, dated Sunday, October 13 of this

year, reads: “12 Hours. 4 Syrian Hospitals Bombed.” It reads: “12 Hours. 4 Syrian Hospitals Bombed.”

The next page, which is full of more detail and an illustration, gives you their conclusion: “Evidence Reveals One Culprit: Russia.” In pertinent part, here is what this article says: “The Russian Air Force has repeatedly bombed hospitals in Syria in order to crush the last pockets of resistance to President Bashar al-Assad.”

The New York Times published evidence that the Russians bombed four Syrian hospitals in a 12-hour period in May of this year. During the assault, the Kafr Nabl Surgical Hospital in Idlib Province was struck four times in 30 minutes. This is a hospital. Dozens of hospitals and clinics in Idlib have been struck since, and Syrian medical workers live in constant fear of the next strike.

I don’t think I even have to say what I am about to say, but it bears repeating for the record. Such atrocities go beyond the pale of violating the Geneva Conventions and the laws of war. They demonstrate just how ruthless and brutal Putin and his regime have been and the lengths to which they will go to assert Russia’s influence in the Middle East.

Under this administration, we have seen U.S. leadership erode and multilateral institutions deteriorate to the point where the United Nations is powerless in holding Russia accountable for these atrocities. As to holding Mr. Putin accountable, this administration has made us less safe.

Let me move to the Kurds. The Syrian Democratic Forces, led by the Kurdish YPG, have been steadfast U.S. partners in counterterrorism operations, as well as in other ways in the Middle East.

As the United States provided training, intelligence, and aerial support, some 11,000 Kurdish fighters died in the fight against ISIS—11,000 Kurdish fighters. Without their courage, sacrifice, partnership, and protection, the United States would have either lost the fight against ISIS—and the coalition would have lost—or won it at a major cost to the lives of U.S. servicemembers and their families.

The Trump administration has abandoned the Kurds. Since the President radically departed from a longstanding strategy in the fight against ISIS, we have seen mass displacement. We have also seen, of course, Russian incursion and the initial signs of an ISIS resurgence in the region.

According to the United Nations, 160,000 people have been displaced, including 70,000 children. Kurdish authorities state that at least 785 persons affiliated with ISIS have escaped.

I ask a couple of basic questions: How exactly does allowing the conditions for humanitarian catastrophe and the escape of sworn enemies of the United States make America safe? How does unilaterally making decisions without consulting U.S. national security lead-

ers and experts, or also our allies who have joined us in the global coalition to fight ISIS, build credibility for U.S. leadership around the world? How do we expect to protect the interests of our ally Israel from threats along the Syrian border? And, finally, how do we justify such a rapid departure in U.S. policy to promote and protect democracy in the Middle East?

DEATH OF ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI

Mr. President, let me move to the al-Baghdadi killing.

We know that on October 27, just weeks after the U.S. withdrawal, the President announced that U.S. Special Forces, those brave fighters who are the best in the world, with support from the U.S. intelligence forces, conducted a raid and confirmed the death of ISIS leader al-Baghdadi.

The President’s failure to credit our Kurdish allies, who provided critical intelligence that led to a successful U.S. operation, is further evidence of his total abandonment of the Kurds and the lack of appreciation for the critical role the Kurds have played in promoting U.S. interests in Syria.

Let us also not forget that the President credited Russia’s cooperation in opening Russian-controlled airspace to U.S. aircraft conducting the raid. He credited them before—before—he credited the U.S. Special Forces who laid down their lives for the mission. I think he could have at least, at a minimum, switched the order there, and he should also have credited the Kurds, as I have stated.

While al-Baghdadi’s death is certainly a major victory for our counterterrorism efforts, the fight against ISIS is far from over. I am deeply troubled—and I know a lot of Members of the Senate in both parties are deeply troubled—by the President’s and, frankly, some of my colleagues’ assertions that our withdrawal from Syria was justified.

The U.S. Defense Department estimates that 10,000 to 15,000 ISIS fighters are working to reconstitute themselves as a major terrorist threat after U.S. withdrawal from Syria.

Let us be clear. Killing al-Baghdadi is not the end of ISIS and certainly not the end of the U.S. commitment to eliminating ISIS.

The decision-making process leading up to U.S. withdrawal carried the hallmarks of chaos and recklessness that are so indicative of how this administration operates when it comes to these issues. Two weeks ago, the U.S. Special Envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, Jim Jeffrey, testified that he was neither consulted nor made aware of the President’s intent to green-light Turkey’s planned offensive but was, rather, briefed afterward.

Special Envoy Jeffrey has decades of experience in the region, and the lack of consultation ahead of this major foreign policy decision shows the lack of deference this administration gives to seasoned career national security officials. Weeks after the withdrawal, Sec-

retary of Defense Esper; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Milley; Special Envoy Jeffrey; the CENTCOM commander, General McKenzie; and the intel community briefed the Senate regarding the events of the last several weeks. It is unacceptable that it took over 3 weeks for Congress to receive a briefing on such a critical change in U.S. foreign policy.

I will speak for myself, but I left that briefing with genuine concern. There is still, in my judgment, no definitive consensus strategy—weeks after withdrawal—to prevent the resurgence of ISIS and ensure the promotion of U.S. national security interests in the region.

This is why Congress must reclaim its authority to conduct oversight over this administration’s unilateral policymaking, which only makes America less safe. The administration’s failure to consult with Congress on its plans in Syria, its support for Saudi Arabia’s campaign in Yemen, and its incendiary actions toward Iran over the last year alone—all of that raises the need for Congress to debate and to vote on an updated authorization for the use of military force, and I will say authorizations, plural. We likely need more than one.

If the President is truly serious about ending U.S. involvement in “endless wars,” he should work with the Congress to repeal the 2001 AUMF, which is out of date, and pass an updated authorization that addresses the threats we face today. We must not only ensure that Congress asserts its constitutionally enabled warmaking authority but also that we thoroughly consider the consequences before sending brave men and women into harm’s way.

The President’s plan to secure oilfields in northeastern Syria is misguided and obtuse. Experts agree that many of these oilfields are already under Kurdish control, and the Kurds have not asked for U.S. support in protecting them. Leaving behind a “small” U.S. force would likely be an ineffective and insufficient gesture after our radical betrayal of Kurdish allies.

This administration must formulate a coherent strategy for a path forward in Syria that goes beyond oilfields and encompasses civilian protection, humanitarian support, and the prevention of the resurgence of ISIS.

Looking ahead, the U.S. goals must focus on three elements: No. 1, preventing the resurgence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria; No. 2, holding Turkey accountable for its war crimes and human rights violations against the Kurds; and No. 3, accomplishing both by keeping the 64-nation Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS intact.

Our allies are the keys to any hope of success here. However, working with allies and coalition partners is exceedingly more difficult due to the President’s reckless actions of late and his constant denigration of U.S. allies.

Ambassador Jeffrey and former Special Envoy Brett McGurk's efforts to build and maintain the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS are the primary reason we were able to convene allies, build and leverage relationships on the ground, and mobilize resources to reclaim territory from ISIS through Iraq and Syria.

Finally, I reiterate my call on the majority leader to allow for a debate and a vote on an updated authorization for the use of military force—and I would say that again, plural—for Iraq and also for Afghanistan. I also call upon the administration to present a clear path forward for U.S. engagement with Syria and Iran.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article from the New York Times International, dated October 13, 2019.

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

[From the New York Times, Oct. 13, 2019]

12 HOURS. 4 SYRIAN HOSPITALS BOMBED. ONE CULPRIT: RUSSIA.

(By Evan Hill and Christiaan Triebert)

The Russian Air Force has repeatedly bombed hospitals in Syria in order to crush the last pockets of resistance to President Bashar al-Assad, according to an investigation by The New York Times.

An analysis of previously unpublished Russian Air Force radio recordings, plane spotter logs and witness accounts allowed The Times to trace bombings of four hospitals in just 12 hours in May and tie Russian pilots to each one.

The 12-hour period beginning on May 5 represents a small slice of the air war in Syria, but it is a microcosm of Russia's four-year military intervention in Syria's civil war. A new front in the conflict opened this week, when Turkish forces crossed the border as part of a campaign against a Kurdish-led militia.

Russia has long been accused of carrying out systematic attacks against hospitals and clinics in rebel-held areas as part of a strategy to help Mr. Assad secure victory in the eight-year-old war.

Physicians for Human Rights, an advocacy group that tracks attacks on medical workers in Syria, has documented at least 583 such attacks since 2011, 266 of them since Russia intervened in September 2015. At least 916 medical workers have been killed since 2011.

The Times assembled a large body of evidence to analyze the hospital bombings on May 5 and 6.

Social media posts from Syria, interviews with witnesses, and records from charities that supported the four hospitals provided the approximate time of each strike. The Times obtained logs kept by flight spotters on the ground who warn civilians about incoming airstrikes and crosschecked the time of each strike to confirm that Russian warplanes were overhead. We then listened to and deciphered thousands of Russian Air Force radio transmissions, which recorded months' worth of pilot activities in the skies above northwestern Syria. The recordings were provided to The Times by a network of observers who insisted on anonymity for their safety.

The spotter logs from May 5 and 6 put Russian pilots above each hospital at the time they were struck, and the Air Force audio recordings from that day feature Russian pilots confirming each bombing. Videos ob-

tained from witnesses and verified by The Times confirmed three of the strikes.

Recklessly or intentionally bombing hospitals is a war crime, but proving culpability amid a complex civil war is extremely difficult, and until now, Syrian medical workers and human rights groups lacked proof.

Russia's position as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council has shielded it from scrutiny and made United Nations agencies reluctant to accuse the Russian Air Force of responsibility.

"The attacks on health in Syria, as well as the indiscriminate bombing of civilian facilities, are definitely war crimes, and they should be prosecuted at the level of the International Criminal Court in The Hague," said Susannah Sirkin, director of policy at Physicians for Human Rights. But Russia and China "shamefully" vetoed a Security Council resolution that would have referred those and other crimes in Syria to the court, she said.

The Russian government did not directly respond to questions about the four hospital bombings. Instead, a Foreign Ministry spokesman pointed to past statements saying that the Russian Air Force carries out precision strikes only on "accurately researched targets."

The United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, opened an investigation into the hospital bombings in August. The investigation, still going on, is meant in part to determine why hospitals that voluntarily added their locations to a United Nations-sponsored deconfliction list, which was provided to Russia and other combatants to prevent them from being attacked, nevertheless came under attack.

Syrian health care workers said they believed that the United Nations list actually became a target menu for the Russian and Syrian air forces.

Stéphane Dujarric, a spokesman for the secretary general, said in September that the investigation—an internal board of inquiry—would not produce a public report or identify "legal responsibility." Vassily Nebenzia, the Russian permanent representative to the United Nations, cast doubt on the process shortly after it was announced, saying he hoped the inquiry would not investigate perpetrators but rather what he said was the United Nations' use of false information in its deconfliction process.

From April 29 to mid-September, as Russian and Syrian government forces assaulted the last rebel pocket in the northwest, 54 hospitals and clinics in opposition territory were attacked, the United Nations human rights office said. At least seven had tried to protect themselves by adding their location to the deconfliction list, according to the World Health Organization.

On May 5 and 6, Russia attacked four. All were on the list.

The first was Nabad al Hayat Surgical Hospital, a major underground trauma center in southern Idlib Province serving about 200,000 people. The hospital performed on average around 500 operations and saw more than 5,000 patients a month, according to Syria Relief and Development, the United States-based charity that supported it.

Nabad al Hayat had been attacked three times since it opened in 2013 and had recently relocated to an underground complex on agricultural land, hoping to be protected from airstrikes.

At 2:32 p.m. on May 5, a Russian ground control officer can be heard in an Air Force transmission providing a pilot with a longitude and latitude that correspond to Nabad al Hayat's exact location.

At 2:38 p.m., the pilot reports that he can see the target and has the "correction," code for locking the target on a screen in his

cockpit. Ground control responds with the green light for the strike, saying, "Three sevens."

At the same moment, a flight spotter on the ground logs a Russian jet circling in the area.

At 2:40 p.m., the same time the charity said that Nabad al Hayat was struck, the pilot confirms the release of his weapons, saying, "Worked it." Seconds later, local journalists filming the hospital in anticipation of an attack record three precision bombs penetrating the roof of the hospital and blowing it out from the inside in geysers of dirt and concrete.

The staff of Nabad al Hayat had evacuated three days earlier after receiving warnings and anticipating a bombing, but Kafr Nabl Surgical Hospital, three miles northwest, was not as lucky.

A doctor who worked there said that the hospital was struck four times, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The strikes landed about five minutes apart, without warning, he said, killing a man who was standing outside and forcing patients and members of the medical staff to use oxygen tanks to breathe through the choking dust.

A spotter logged a Russian jet circling above at the time of the strike, and in another Russian Air Force transmission, a pilot reports that he has "worked" his target at 5:30 p.m., the time of the strike. He then reports three more strikes, each about five minutes apart, matching the doctor's chronology.

Russian pilots bombed two other hospitals in the same 12-hour span: Kafr Zita Cave Hospital and Al Amal Orthopedic Hospital. In both cases, spotters recorded Russian Air Force jets in the skies at the time of the strike, and Russian pilots can be heard in radio transmissions "working" their targets at the times the strikes were reported.

Since May 5, at least two dozen hospitals and clinics in the rebel-held northwest have been hit by airstrikes. Syrian medical workers said they expected hospital bombings to continue, given the inability of the United Nations and other countries to find a way to hold Russia to account.

"The argument by the Russians or the regime is always that hospitals are run by terrorists," said Nabad al Hayat's head nurse, who asked to remain anonymous because he feared being targeted. "Is it really possible that all the people are terrorists?"

"The truth is that after hospitals are hit, and in areas like this where there is just one hospital, our houses have become hospitals."

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I am going to turn to another matter of importance for U.S. national security, and that is climate change. Climate change is the most significant challenge our world faces right now, transcending borders and affecting every aspect of our lives.

Climate change is a threat to human life. It is caused by human activity, and we must confront it. Our Nation has a moral imperative to protect the Earth, God's creation, and the people living on that Earth, particularly children whose health and well-being will be affected—I would say adversely affected—by climate change in incomprehensible ways.

For far too long we have discussed climate change, food insecurity, and political stability in separate silos. However, these issues are inextricably

linked, and we must apply an integrated approach to ensuring that global food supply keeps pace with population growth amidst a continuing trend of climate change in a way that promotes stable, transparent democratic societies around the world.

The late Senator Dick Lugar from the State of Indiana asked me to work with him to introduce the Global Food Security Act way back in the 2007–2008 time period. At that time, Senator Lugar wanted to try to pass legislation that would authorize USAID's Feed the Future Program. Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON was a steadfast partner in actually passing the Global Food Security Act. We passed that legislation years after Senator Lugar and I were starting the work.

The Global Food Security Act is empowering the USAID to develop a more integrated, interagency approach to food security across agricultural value chains and expanding farmers' access to local and international markets through the Feed the Future Program.

We, as a body, must continue to advocate for the next generation of agricultural policy: Promote sustainable agriculture that will be able to keep pace with growing global demand, population growth, and climate change.

As a member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, I am increasingly concerned about our ability to keep pace with agricultural production as global population grows. The global population is expected to grow from 7.7 billion to 10 billion by 2050, and with that, demand for meat and dairy could increase between 59 and 98 percent, according to Columbia University's Earth Institute.

The impact of climate change on food systems across the globe will be almost incomprehensible, but perhaps nowhere larger than Sub-Saharan Africa. Now, 90 percent of the region's cropland, meaning Sub-Saharan Africa—90 percent of that region's cropland is expected to see yield losses of up to 40 percent—90 percent seeing yield losses of up to 40 percent.

We face some of the same challenges here at home, and we are working to help farmers adapt to these pressures while also being part of the solution through climate-friendly agricultural policies.

While we have made advances in recent decades, we still have high rates of undernourishment and child stunting around the world. The number of chronically hungry people around the world has increased today to 821 million people, representing one out of every nine people on the planet, many of whom are women and children. I will say that again. The number of chronically hungry people around the world has increased to one in every nine people on the planet.

The number of children under 5 affected by stunting has decreased by 10 percent in the past 6 years. That is a little bit of good news, but 149 million children are still stunted. This pace is

too slow to meet our United Nations Sustainable Development Goal to cut stunting in half by 2030—just 11 years away.

Our own intelligence community has linked global food insecurity to instability, which can lead to a rise in violent extremism and international crime that will affect the United States. In January 2014, the worldwide threat assessment of the U.S. intelligence community reported that “lack of adequate food will be a destabilizing factor in countries important to [U.S.] national security.”

The “2010 Quadrennial Defense Review” marked a turning point in how the United States grappled with the issue of climate change. For the first time, in 2010, climate change was cited as a “threat multiplier” by the Department of Defense, noting “the impacts of climate change may increase the frequency, scale, and complexity of future missions.”

From Syria to Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin, but also in urban upheaval in Sudan, we see the impacts of environmental stress and high food prices on political stability in regions vital to U.S. national security interests.

This brings me to political stability. According to the U.S. Global Food Security Strategy, food insecurity exacerbated by climate change will contribute to “social disruptions and political instability. . . . Projections indicate that more than two-thirds of the world's poor could be living in fragile countries, where state-society relations are already strained, by 2030.”

When societies break down because governments are unable to provide resilient infrastructure against climate events, as well as protect local markets from vulnerabilities due to climate events, trust in institutions erodes and nations are ripe for conflict. If we permit climate change to proceed without aggressive action, investment, and coordination with partners around the world, we are not only allowing millions around the world to suffer extreme hunger resulting from climate-related disasters, but we are also allowing conditions for the rise of extremism and the breakdown of democratic institutions to foment unchecked.

For millions of people across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, climate change means more frequent and intense floods, droughts, and storms, accounting each year for up to 90 percent of all natural disasters. These disasters can quickly spiral into full-blown food and nutrition crises.

I will wrap up with this: As we look to the hard work of congressional oversight over the Feed the Future Program, I am pleased that USAID has already begun to bridge its emergency humanitarian programming with its longer term development efforts to build resilience for communities affected by conflict and climate change.

The United States cannot do this alone. We need to work together on a global scale not only to reduce green-

house gas emissions but also to mitigate economic risk and ensure that agricultural and food supply chains can withstand climate events. This administration's decision to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement was a huge blow to U.S. leadership in climate policy. I and many Members of Congress and individuals throughout the U.S. Government, along with our State and local government partners, as well as leaders in the business community across the United States, will continue to fight for policies that bring the United States in line with its Paris goals, ensuring we are doing our part to address this global threat to human life.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

JUDICIAL CONFIRMATIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about the work we have been doing in the Senate this week and the work we have been doing in the Senate the last 3 years, and that is the work of confirming a record number of judicial nominees.

I want to specifically focus on our record on circuit court judges. As you know, these are the courts just one layer below the Supreme Court, and their decisions have enormous consequences for the country. We have confirmed 45 highly qualified circuit court judges. We have done it across all 12 appeals courts nationwide. These judges will decide 99 percent of the Federal cases in America.

President Trump has nominated each of these judges. Senate Republicans confirmed each of these judges. These judges now hold a full one-quarter—one out of every four—circuit court seats in America. All of these judges have lifetime appointments. These circuit court judges are ruling right now, and they are doing it on major cases all across the country.

How are they making a difference in people's lives? No. 1, by protecting Americans' constitutional rights, by upholding our individual freedoms, by putting a check on government power, and above all, these judges are applying the law as written, not legislating from the bench.

Based on the 45 circuit court judges we have seated and the judges we will continue to seat, Senate Republicans have delivered conservative judges who will serve our Nation for decades to come.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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

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

VETERANS DAY

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I am wearing a pin on my right lapel that was presented to me by some folks today who appreciate veterans, and I appreciate being recognized.

I am a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and Air Force Reserve. I retired from that organization, and I appreciate their coming to put an extra pin on me today.

We will celebrate Veterans Day on November 11, and I will be making speeches. Hopefully, many of us will be properly recognizing those of us who have worn the uniform and taken the oath and are serving in that respect.

Today I want to talk about another group of folks, and those are the future veterans. By that, of course, I mean the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and servicemembers who are serving their country now on Active Duty. I make a plea to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, at both ends of this building, to get our work done at least for national security.

We are at a time of heightened politics. There are tensions in this building as there often have been, but at this critical juncture, with so much at stake around the world, it seems to me we ought to be able to pass the National Defense Authorization Act, of which the distinguished chairman, Chairman INHOFE, and his ranking member, Senator REED from Rhode Island, have prepared and are ready to go on. It seems we ought to be able to come to an agreement with the other body and get that to the President for his signature.

We are now 5 weeks into the current fiscal year, and we don't have an appropriations bill done for the Department of Defense. We have to have the authorization act, which I mentioned, but at the beginning of October, we are supposed to have the government funded, and we don't.

We are under a continuing resolution, a CR, and it sounds so harmless, like we are just continuing the funding until we get all the numbers right. That is not true. Every defense expert in the government—formally in the government and outside of the government—will tell you that a continuing resolution is harmful to our Nation's defense. It not only sends the wrong signal, it has us sending money in the wrong direction and has us not spending money where we need to spend it.

At the end of this month, when the current CR ends, we need to be ready with a permanent appropriations bill for the Department of Defense for this current fiscal year. Just think of what we are looking at right now. Iran is the largest State sponsor of terror, and it is on the warpath. Iran knocked out the world's largest oil facility in Saudi Arabia just a couple of months ago and is attacking tankers in the gulf. This is no time to not have a permanent appropriations bill for this fiscal year.

Vladimir Putin's Russia is in a shooting war against our partners in Ukraine. The Communist Government of China is brutalizing its own people on the streets of Hong Kong violating the "one nation, two systems" policy.

That is not the half of it. The Chinese dictator, Xi Jinping, is not keeping his repressive ambitions at home as we know from what is going on in the Pacific. As my friend, the chairman of the full Armed Services Committee, pointed out, the People's Republic of China has increased military spending by 83 percent. China has increased military spending by 83 percent over the last decade at a time when we can't even agree on the funding for the current fiscal year we are in. That sends a signal around the world. You best believe Xi Jinping knows we can't get our act together through a funding bill.

Now my hat is off to the leaders, both Republican and Democratic, in this body who have done their job and are ready to go forward with the funding bill, but we need to join hands and actually get it done. For some reason, we have not been able to do that. I am begging my colleagues, let's fund our military, and let's fund these future veterans who are serving on Active Duty right now. The current continuing resolution is doing real damage to our national security. It is harming the progress we have already made to rebuild our military since the sequester—and wasn't that a disaster. It is harming our military men and women and making it harder for them to do their jobs going forward.

I want to quote General Mattis, former Secretary Mattis, who said this, as Secretary, about continuing resolutions:

It's not like we even maintain the status quo if we go into one of these situations yet again. We actually lose ground.

I urge my fellow colleagues in the Senate and in the other body to heed the words of this great military leader. We are losing ground today, November 6, 2019, because we are under a CR. We have seen it before, and unfortunately we are losing money and losing readiness right now. Extending the CR any further will harm military personnel in every branch. The Air Force is short 2,100 pilots. Keeping the CR going would cut \$123 million from undergraduate pilot training.

Under a continuation of the CR further than the end of this month, naval training will be scaled back dramatically. We will not be able to fix dangerous housing that we have had hearings about and there has been a scandal about in the press. We will not be able to attend to that because we are working under a continuation of last year's old-fashioned numbers. Vital research and development programs will go unbegun. Not only that, keeping a CR going not only doesn't save money, it actually costs us money because we are spending dollars on programs we have decided not to be involved in anymore. We want to move in a different direc-

tion. The House and Senate leaders have decided to do that, the Members of the Pentagon have decided to do that, but under the CR we are forced to keep spending money on programs we don't need anymore.

According to General Martin, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, delays and misallocated funds cost \$7 billion every month, and that is just for the Army.

We have an opportunity to correct this, or we have an opportunity to waste another \$20 billion on a yearlong CR. I am urging the American public to make it known to those of us at Veterans Day programs this weekend and next week. I am urging my colleagues to stress this when they talk to the public.

There are appropriations bills that are not yet worked out, but for heaven's sake, let's at least do the bill that pays the troops and sends a signal to the rest of the world in these trying times that we are at least going to fund our Defense Department and our future veterans who are on Active Duty and who have taken the oath today and that we will do them in a modern and timely fashion. We are 5 weeks late. Let's not make it another 5 weeks after this and another 5 months after that.

Pass a full-funding appropriations bill for our troops, for the Department of Defense, and give them the type of representation and government that they deserve based upon their worthy service.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The bill clerk read the nomination of Danielle J. Hunsaker, of Oregon, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY).

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 Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN), are necessarily absent.