

To my friends on the other side of the aisle, the fiscal conservatives, we need your voices.

If this program were going to the urban areas or maybe to the poorer people, we would hear an outcry from certain Members on the other side, but our farmers need the help too. When you waste money on an ag program, the people who are hurt the most are our smaller and family farmers, particularly, in this case, in the Middle West.

For years, my Republican friends in this Chamber accused the Obama administration—unfairly, in my mind—of picking winners and losers in the market. It was one of their favorite talking points. Here, we have the Trump administration literally picking winners and losers among American farmers. Sometimes the winners are not even American. Oftentimes, the losers are the small family farmers who need assistance the most.

I am so glad that my Democrat colleagues on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, especially Ranking Member STABENOW, have worked to inject some transparency into the agriculture relief program.

The Trump administration should be using the Market Facilitation Program to help those farmers most in need—period. The Trump administration needs to stop picking winners and losers and make sure all American farmers get the help they deserve.

VETERANS

Mr. President, finally, on veterans—this is another one—when I look at what this administration is doing, and if every American knew all these things, Donald Trump wouldn't stand a chance. This one, I hope, will get out.

I talked a little bit about this yesterday. We all know that so many of our young men and women—my generation—went to Vietnam and risked their lives. Many of them gave their lives for our country. One of the worst aspects of things is that they were not treated as heroes when they came home.

I think America has made up for that now, but here is a way that we are not treating them well at all. Many of them were exposed to Agent Orange, and it became clear that many got sick from exposure to Agent Orange while fighting in Vietnam.

Well, what the VA has found is that certain illnesses are caused by exposure to Agent Orange, and they found that there are four more illnesses that have an Agent Orange link. But quietly and secretly, the Trump administration denied payments to over 60,000 veterans who had these illnesses and who received emergency care at non-VA facilities in 2017.

It has missed deadlines to expand the VA caregivers program to Vietnam and Korean war veterans, and there are some reports that the Trump VA hired doctors on probation, but what is galling at the moment is this Agent Orange situation and hiding the report.

Mulvaney, evidently, the Chief of Staff, just said quietly: We are not

funding it. It took a Freedom of Information Act action to reveal that they were cutting the money off for these folks.

They went to Vietnam. Some of them volunteered. Some of them were drafted. They got sick because of exposure to Agent Orange, and the Trump administration, which loves to have rallies with veterans, cuts the money off from them, saying that Mulvaney said we couldn't afford it.

These veterans could afford to risk their lives for us. We can afford to help them in their hour of need. I hope the administration will reverse its decision.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:48 p.m., recessed until 2 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PERDUE).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I have the right to yield to Senator COLLINS at the end of my remarks.

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

PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICING REDUCTION ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, polls show a surprising interest of Americans in the high cost of prescription drugs. It seems to be an issue that unites Americans. I often point out that Washington is an island surrounded by reality. Here inside the Beltway, people are obsessed with partisan impeachment proceedings. It seems like morning, noon, and night, the relentless effort to unseat the President of the United States is a toxic strain of Potomac fever infecting Capitol Hill.

Now, if only Congress would channel every waking minute to fix problems in the real world, wouldn't that be wonderful? So let me provide a reality check. For people living in the real world, impeachment inquiry is not what keeps Americans up at night. It is not what wakes up moms and dads worried sick about paying for their child's insulin. It is not what drains the pocketbooks of seniors and takes a big bite out of people's paychecks. The issue that unites Americans from Maine, to Iowa, to Oregon is the sky-high prices that Americans and the taxpaying public are paying for prescription medicine.

As chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, I am working in a bipartisan way to fix what is broken in our drug supply chain. In February, we called the heads of Big Pharma to testify before the Finance Committee.

Next, we heard from the largest pharmacy benefit managers to examine rebates and unravel the pricing supply chain. There was an awful lot of finger-pointing between the various interests about the soaring drug prices that Americans pay for pharmaceuticals. That finger-pointing, we heard in our committee. Finger-pointing doesn't decrease drug prices because the real problem is there is too much secrecy and not enough accountability in the industry of pricing drugs.

When drug prices grow by leaps and bounds, year after year, it is time to look under the hood. It is time to kick the tires along the drug supply chain and check the gauge on the competition. Why in the world is insulin, just as an example—a drug that has been on the market for nearly 100 years—doubling or tripling in price for patients in the United States? It is surely not that way in Europe.

We have gotten lots of feedback from patient advocates, healthcare providers, and free market proponents. The pushback from Big Pharma reveals that we are really on to something. Congress needs to take its foot off the brake. It is time to deliver real savings, and our bill will deliver real savings to consumers and to the taxpayers. It is time to pass reforms that will cut prescription drug costs for the American people.

Now, some of my colleagues may require a more blunt call to action so I want to use the two-by-four illustration. Join us and score a win for the American people. Otherwise, do nothing and risk being on the losing side of the ballot box next November.

At my annual 99 county meetings where I always hold a Q&A with whatever groups of constituents gather, I hear the same message from people all across the State of Iowa. They have family members and they have neighbors who struggle to pay for prescription management, to manage chronic health conditions, and to treat diseases. Thanks to breakthrough treatments and cures, Americans are living longer and healthier lives.

Many are beating the odds of a diagnosis that would have been a death sentence a generation ago. However, if a loved one is diagnosed with MS or diabetes or cystic fibrosis, no miracle cure will help if Americans can't afford to pay for their medicine. It will not help seniors if sky-high prices drain taxpayer-financed health programs like Medicare and Medicaid. Soaring drug prices are forcing too many Americans to skimp on other necessities or even ration their doses of prescriptions that they take.

Now, I just mentioned, as an example, cystic fibrosis. Last month, the FDA approved a promising new treatment for this progressive genetic disorder. Cystic fibrosis impacts about 30,000 Americans. There is nothing parents will not do to advocate for their child living with this condition. That is how I met one family from Iowa a few

years ago. That is when I launched the bipartisan Senate caucus on cystic fibrosis, to add our voices for awareness and advocacy. Now, I am told the price tag for the new drug is more than \$300,000 per patient, per year.

Without a doubt, this drug raises the roof of hope for tens of thousands of families, but it also raises a red flag about drug prices. If prices keep going through the roof year after year, how will Americans who depend on prescription medicines afford them? America's drug pricing regime is broken. It requires reform to sustain fiscal sustainability and also to steer incubation and innovation forward. It needs more transparency. It needs better incentives. It needs real competition to drive down prices. So all 100 of us have our work cut out for us.

Big Pharma doesn't want the pipeline to the Federal Treasury tightened at all, and they will spend big money to scare people away from reasonable solutions that will deliver real savings and get the best deal for the taxpayers. I referred to our working in a bipartisan way. So, in July, Ranking Member WYDEN and I secured broad, bipartisan support in our Finance Committee—19 denying vote.

Our bill would save taxpayers more than \$100 billion. That is not this Senate saying that. That is the Congressional Budget Office. The bill caps out-of-pocket costs for seniors. The bill saves their households more than \$30 billion. We fine-tuned and improved our bill to gain more momentum and more support. Part of that support and one of the outstanding advocates for what we are trying to do doesn't happen to be a member of the Finance Committee, but it is my good friend from Maine, Senator COLLINS, right here on the floor. I will yield to her in short time.

She is helping lead the fight to reduce drug prices. We have been working together on many issues. I am a former chairman of the Special Committee on Aging, and she is the current chair of the Special Committee on Aging. We are committed to help older Americans lead productive lives. We also share a top priority not to miss a vote. While I might have a stronger voting streak, SUSAN hasn't missed a single vote. I hope Maine appreciates a person who has been in the Senate since 1997 and hasn't missed a single vote.

Senator COLLINS is one of those rare lawmakers who doesn't care who gets the credit, as long as we are doing the right thing. The name of this bill that I am talking about—and I imagine she will refer to—is the Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act. That will be the right thing to do, and it will do the right thing. So it is time for Congress to do the right thing.

Just in case I said anything different about Senator COLLINS that is not accurate, she can feel free to correct me, but I now yield to Senator COLLINS, a strong voice for this piece of legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, let me first thank and recognize Senator GRASSLEY for his farsighted, courageous leadership on this issue of vital importance to the American people, the escalating costs of prescription drugs.

Under Senator GRASSLEY's chairmanship, the Finance Committee has held numerous hearings on drug pricing. His diligence, his persistence on this issue has produced the bipartisan Prescription Drug Price Reduction Act, a bold and effective set of proposals that I strongly endorse and look forward to seeing signed into law.

This past century could well be called the age of miracle drugs, from insulin and penicillin to pharmaceuticals that treat cancer, HIV, heart disease, and so many other serious conditions, modern drugs have been proven to improve, extend, and even save lives. In our time, however, we might define a miracle drug as one that has not doubled in price since the last refill. With prescription drugs among the key factors driving up the cost of healthcare, it is essential that we approve policies that both encourage innovation and protect consumers, particularly our seniors.

Demonstrating the importance of this challenge, three Senate committees—the Senate Finance Committee, ably chaired by Senator GRASSLEY, which I mentioned earlier; the Senate HELP Committee, which is led by our friend and colleague Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER; and the Judiciary Committee, which is led by Senator GRAHAM—have advanced bills aimed at reforming our broken drug pricing system.

In addition, the Senate Aging Committee, which I chair, has held eight hearings on drug pricing since 2015 and issued a major report in 2016 on Sudden Price Spikes in Off-Patent Prescription Drugs. Our report highlighted the manipulative schemes employed by Martin Shkreli, who increased the price of a drug that was more than 63 years old—a lifesaving medication—by 5,000 percent in just 1 day.

To paraphrase his words, he could drive up the price of drugs like this one on which he had not spent a dime in the research and development because he could. His price gouging caused real hardships for patients.

Some of the most alarming testimony we have heard on the Aging Committee has come from patients. They describe the financial impact of their prescription drug prices, the depths they have gone to to access medications they need, and how this struggle has affected their health and their overall quality of life. They are truly choosing between paying their electric bill, buying the food they need, and filling their prescription drugs.

An example is a young father from New Gloucester, ME, who discovered that the cost of a 90-day supply of insu-

lin for his 13-year-old son who has type 1 diabetes had more than tripled to more than \$900.

A woman from Falmouth, ME, saw her out-of-pocket costs for the arthritis medication Enbrel that she needs soar from \$10 to \$3,800 per month when she transitioned from her employer-sponsored insurance to Medicare when she retired. She had no choice but to switch medications, which did not work nearly as well for her, but she simply could not afford that out-of-pocket cost.

I will never forget standing in line at the pharmacy counter in Bangor, ME, where I live. The couple ahead of me received their prescription drug and the unwelcome news that their prescription copay was going to be \$111. The husband turned to his wife and said "Honey, we simply cannot afford that," and they walked away, leaving that needed prescription on the pharmacy counter.

I asked the pharmacist: How often does this happen?

His answer: Every day.

The results of exorbitant increases in the price of drugs are that needed prescriptions aren't filled, doses are skipped, and pills are cut in half—all harmful to the patient's health. And why? Because the patient simply cannot afford the exorbitant costs, the skyrocketing costs of these drugs.

This should not happen. We must join together to combat the exorbitant prescription costs that confront more and more Americans every day. More than half of all Americans and 90 percent of our seniors take at least one prescription drug each month. For many, access to these medicines is not only critical to their well-being, but it can literally be a matter of life and death.

For children and adults with type 1 diabetes, insulin is not a luxury or something that is nice to have; insulin is essential to their ability to survive. Insulin was first isolated nearly a century ago in Canada. Yet its cost has soared in recent years.

Another chairman in the Senate who has worked very hard on this issue, along with Senator GRASSLEY, is Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER. He has made it a strong priority of the HELP Committee, on which I serve, to increase transparency and competition in the prescription drug market.

I don't think there is any product that we buy in this country where there is less transparency in the price than the price of prescription drugs and where the supply chain is more rife with conflicts of interest.

Last year, in response to my experience listening to this couple in Bangor, ME, I authored a bill to block pharmacy gag clauses. Under these contractual gag clauses, pharmacists were actually prohibited from volunteering to a consumer that it might well be less expensive to pay out-of-pocket rather than use their insurance. A recent study published by the Journal of the American Medicine Association found

that this new law could help Americans save money in nearly one out of four prescription transactions in a pharmacy.

Another bill I authored in 2017 to promote more competition from lower price but equally effective generic drugs is also showing results. To date, the FDA has granted nearly 200 application requests under the new expedited pathway established by this law, with 12 approvals. That is a much faster pace than in the past.

In June, the HELP Committee reported out the Lower Healthcare Costs Act, which incorporates more than 14 measures to increase drug price competition. I am pleased to say that it includes major portions of the Biologic Patent Transparency Act that I authored with Senator KAINE, and that is cosponsored by Senators BRAUN, HAWLEY, PORTMAN, SHAHEEN, STABENOW, PAUL, and MURKOWSKI. It is intended to prevent drug manufacturers from gaming the patent system. It requires earlier and greater disclosure of the web of patents held by biologic manufacturers, thus making it easier for biosimilar competitors to develop more affordable alternatives without being stymied by the filing of last-minute patents.

According to former FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, if all of the biosimilars that have been approved by the FDA were successfully marketed in the United States in a timely fashion, Americans would have saved more than \$4.5 billion in 2017.

The fact that a biosimilar version of HUMIRA—the best selling drug in the world—has been on the market in Europe for more than a year while American patients must wait until 2023 is a clear example that the biosimilar market is not working as it should.

The Lower Healthcare Costs Act also includes the CREATES Act—a bill that I know Senator GRASSLEY has been very involved in. It addresses the anti-competitive practices of companies that delay or even block access to a sufficient quantity of the brand-name drug needed to conduct the bioequivalency test required by the FDA as part of the generic drug approval process. This addresses one of the major problems identified by the Aging Committee when we looked at this issue starting in 2016, examining the explosion in prices of prescription drugs for which there is no generic equivalent. I am pleased that we are on the verge of taking action to combat and stop this unfair practice.

The HELP Committee bill also requires significantly more disclosure on the costs, fees, and rebate information associated with PBM contracts; that is, prescription benefit managers. I know the Finance Committee bill does as well.

As I mentioned previously, the Finance Committee passed the Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act—landmark legislation that would save taxpayers more than \$100 billion and

save seniors more than \$30 billion in out-of-pocket costs for their prescriptions. I strongly support this bill because it strikes the right balance between reducing out-of-pocket costs for consumers without hindering innovation and investment in the next life-saving medications.

The Finance Committee bill also makes crucial improvements to Medicare Part D, such as protecting seniors with an out-of-pocket spending cap—another long overdue change that would ensure that patients with high-cost conditions, such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, and rheumatoid arthritis, can get the medications they need. Furthermore, the bill would protect taxpayers from higher than inflation increases in drug prices, while reducing government spending, premiums, and overall out-of-pocket costs.

The Judiciary Committee has also advanced proposals that would empower the Federal Trade Commission to take more aggressive action on anti-competitive behaviors.

These are three worthwhile pieces of legislation that should be brought to the Senate floor. The work of the Finance Committee, the HELP Committee, and the Judiciary Committee is a tremendous breakthrough that would make such a difference to the American people.

As we continue to find further consensus and a path forward on each of these bipartisan bills, I hope we can also look for additional improvements. For example, as cochairs of the Senate Diabetes Caucus, Senator SHAHEEN and I, along with Senators CRAMER and CARPER, have introduced legislation to address flaws in the system that have allowed pharmacy benefit managers and manufacturers to implement what are truly unscrupulous price increases on lifesaving insulin. I also support a measure introduced by Senators KLOBUCHAR and GRASSLEY to prohibit brand-name drug companies from compensating generic drug companies to delay the entry of a less costly but equally effective generic into the market. That is referred to as “pay for delay.” I am amazed that it is not already illegal under our anti-trust laws. This bill would make it clear that this tactic is no longer permitted.

Congress has a tremendous opportunity to deliver a decisive victory in both lowering healthcare costs and improving healthcare for the people in my State of Maine and throughout America. If we want new medicines to reach consumers who need them, the companies that invest in research and take the risks necessary must see a fair return on their investment, but at the same time, we can no longer allow the price manipulation and the market distortions to continue at the expense of the most vulnerable Americans and their families and ultimately at the expense of every American taxpayer.

We can act to make a real difference in the lives of Americans whose health depends on affordable prescription

drugs. The required policy solutions will not come in the form of a miracle but through hard work and continued bipartisan cooperation.

Let us come together. I urge all of my colleagues to join in supporting the measures we have worked so hard on and that the HELP Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Judiciary Committee have all reported, on a bipartisan basis, recognizing the hardships imposed on the American people. Let us bring these bills to the Senate floor expeditiously.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, I come down to the Chamber today to talk a little bit and highlight the vast differences in the priorities between the two Chambers in the U.S. Congress today.

Several of my colleagues will be down here a little later today to talk about and to encourage the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act—a bill, by the way, that passed the Senate in a very strong bipartisan way, reflective of strong bipartisan input, in a vote of 86 to 8. The House also passed their version of the National Defense Authorization Act on more of a party-line vote.

The point being, both Chambers have passed it; the reconciliation of the two bills has begun; the negotiations have begun, but they have been stalled. I think it is a strong reflection of the differences between the two Chambers.

First, I will talk a little bit about why it is important that we do this job. First of all, there have been 58 years in a row that the NDAA has passed the House and the Senate and signed into law. Why? Well, because it is the highest priority of the government—of all the bills we do every year, apart from and very close to appropriations, would be authorization of our national defense programs. That is why it has happened 58 years in a row.

It is important for a number of reasons. One of the things that both the House version and the Senate version of the NDAA does is highlight the importance of space with the creation of a Space Force, as we call it in the Senate, and Space Corps, as they call it in the House. Nonetheless, it is similar, and it represents and recognizes the importance of space domain as a warfighting domain going forward, a priority that our near-peer allies have already recognized in their policies.

Without NDAA passing, that goes by the wayside for at least another year. It also fully funds several national priorities, not the least of which is, of course, the largest pay increase in 10 years for our men and women who wear the uniform.

On a more local level for me, it authorizes the modernization of our nuclear fleet, including the ground-based missiles known as the ICBMs that we have 150 of in North Dakota at Minot.

It modernizes this system, which is several decades old. If we need anything, we need to modernize our weapons systems again to keep pace with our near-peer adversaries.

It also authorizes millions of dollars in funds to the national Global Hawk mission, which is headquartered in Grand Forks, another very important Air Force base in my State. It authorizes funds for the MQ-9 program. MQ-9s are flown by North Dakota Air National Guardsmen in Fargo's Happy Hooligans. It also advances the mission of the Cavalier Air Force Station in Cavalier, ND, one of the very few space radar stations, and it ensures that the needs of all our Guard operations are met.

The House bill, by the way, also does something that is very important to me. It is a bill I have introduced, along with my colleagues from New York, that honors the 74 sailors who lost their lives in the *Frank E. Evans* 50 years ago during the Vietnam war. These sailors' names have been left off the Vietnam Memorial Wall over a minor technicality, a technicality that probably shouldn't be in the rules to begin with, but certainly it has been waived in many other circumstances and needs to be waived in this NDAA. I would love to get that House language into the final bill.

None of these priorities are going to be met if House Democrats—and I focus on House Democrats—if they don't come to the table and act in good faith and negotiate in good faith. Senate Democrats have had a major part in this, and I welcome every bit of involvement they provide.

One of the joys of being on the Armed Services Committee for me has been being able to see a functioning committee that works well across party lines. Obviously, Senate Republicans are all on board. House Republicans are all on board. For some reason, the House leadership on the Democratic side is focused on other priorities, and the contrast could not be more clear.

While we have been working hard in the Senate on appropriations, as well as the Defense authorization, our chairman has used his voice—Chairman INHOFE—and used his incredible work ethic and his wisdom in working with Senator REED, the ranking Democrat, on getting these priorities to the forefront. I can't think of a better tandem than those two gentlemen.

Chairman INHOFE is truly one of the hardest working, most decent, and honorable people I have ever worked with. Chairman SMITH, the chairman in the House committee, could learn a few things from him.

Again, while we passed the bill with overwhelming bipartisan support, the House bill was a much more partisan exercise. We want to prevent a government shutdown. We want to prevent a continuing resolution. So along with the NDAA, of course, is the Defense appropriations bill, and we have to get both of them done. We want to give our

military a win-win situation, where they get the pay raises, where they get the modernization they need, where new programs can be launched, and where we can provide long-term certainty.

While we are trying to provide at least a win for our military, Democrats in the House are focused on trying to win the 2016 Presidential election, not even thinking so much about the next one. They are involved in a kangaroo court over there. I watched a half hour of it today, and I could hardly believe what I was seeing. Today's political theater in the House is unnecessary, and 3 years into it, it is an outward demonstration of the inward motivation of a party that is trying to undo the Presidency of Donald Trump.

Instead of prioritizing our constitutional responsibilities, they are engaged in political theater in a kangaroo court. I am pleading, once again, with my colleagues across the aisle and especially across the Capitol, in these last couple of days, while the negotiators are together trying to figure out a path forward, please come to the table, please act in good conscience. Please, please, please look for opportunities where we can compromise, and, for Pete's sake, let's at least pass the things we all agree on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

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

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

NOMINATIONS

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, earlier today, we were asked to vote on the confirmation of Chad Wolf to serve as the Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans at the Department of Homeland Security. Mr. Wolf has been serving in that role on an acting basis since February.

Because of the way the Trump administration functions, or fails to function, what we were really being asked to do today was to confirm Mr. Wolf to a position so the President can then promote him to Acting DHS Secretary. This comes on top of most appointed positions at the agency going unfilled or only filled with similarly temporary acting roles.

Before we all throw our hands up in the air and simply add this vote to the growing list of broken norms and incompetent actions on the part of the Trump White House, I would like us to consider what is at stake in this particular case. I beg us to take seriously the human toll that has been incurred because of this administration's willful chaos at the Department of Homeland Security.

The Department of Homeland Security is the Nation's third largest Federal agency, behind only the Pentagon and the VA. The agency oversees disaster relief, transportation safety, counterterrorism, and immigration and

border security. According to a report in the Washington Post, Mr. Wolf is the favored pick of senior Trump adviser Stephen Miller to take over as Acting Homeland Security Secretary. That should tell us about everything we need to know.

Stephen Miller has been the lead architect of the White House's immoral and anti-immigration policies over the last 3 years. The Senate should have taken this vote as a reason to examine how this administration has spent the last 3 years flouting our Nation's laws and our Nation's values through its intentional chaos at the Department of Homeland Security.

We should do our jobs and give an honest accounting of this administration's inhumane and, frankly, ineffective policies—policies, it should be said, that Mr. Wolf has been right in the middle of each step of the way. Instead, the Senate voted to confirm Mr. Wolf in this sham process to a position we weren't even sure he will serve in. This is shameful.

Now that the Senate has confirmed Mr. Wolf to the Under Secretary position and as we anticipate Mr. Trump moving him into the Acting Secretary role, I ask my colleagues to please consider his record. We know Mr. Wolf played a central role in authoring and implementing the family separation policy. We don't fully understand how much he did to implement President Trump's other harmful immigration policies because the Department of Homeland Security has stonewalled and refused to provide key documents to the Senate on his tenure before we took the vote this morning.

However, given his major role with Secretary Nielsen, it seems safe to assume that Mr. Wolf was involved in many of the administration's policy failures. Under these policies, thousands of children, as young as infants and toddlers, arriving at our Nation's southern border have been separated from their families. We have seen migrant families and children held in appalling, overcrowded, some say prisonlike—I would say prison facilities—immigration detention facilities like those in Clint, TX, that we saw in the media.

The Trump administration has also throttled major ports of entry where refugees present themselves for asylum as is actually dictated by current U.S. law. This has resulted in huge groups going instead to remote and dangerous stretches of the southern border. We have tragically seen that result in the deaths of several children in New Mexico near some of our remote ports of entry that lack even the most basic medical infrastructure.

We have seen President Trump play politics with the lives of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers, mothers, fathers, and children who are desperately seeking refuge and the prospect of a better life in this country.

We have seen the President even go so far as shutting down the government and stealing billions of dollars of

congressionally appropriated funds from the military to pay for his wasteful and candidly ineffective border wall.

Finally, President Trump's decision to terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, or DACA, has thrown Dreamers across this country deep into fear and uncertainty. The stakes of that decision have been shown in oral arguments before the Supreme Court this very week.

Dreamers are among our best and brightest—our best and brightest students, teachers, and even veterans. They only know this Nation as their home in many cases, and today I am meeting with a Dreamer named Samuel, who lives in Las Cruces, NM.

Samuel came to the United States from Mexico with his family when he was 11 years old. He has called Las Cruces his hometown for the last 13 years. As a DACA recipient, Samuel was able to study accounting at New Mexico State University and help provide for his family.

Dreamers like Samuel want to give back to their communities and the only Nation they know as home. They are American in every way except on paper, and because of President Trump, Dreamers like Samuel face a deeply fearful future.

Whenever we debate immigration, frankly, it becomes a little personal for me, and that is because, like most—all of us in this Nation of immigrants—my family's story in America began with a search for a better life. My father came to the United States with his family from Germany as a young boy. They were fleeing the government of a racist, populist dictator who was first elected democratically and then used race and scapegoating to cement his grip on power. I always wonder how different my own life would be if America had turned my father away or separated him from his family.

This is not some abstract question for the mothers, fathers, and children who are desperately seeking refuge and the prospect of a better life in America today. I know that so many Americans watching this administration's immigration policies know in their hearts what America truly stands for as a nation built by many generations of immigrants like my father. That includes local officials, first responders, and volunteers in communities like Deming, Las Cruces, and Albuquerque, NM, who over the last year provided shelter, food, and help to asylum seekers who had nowhere else to turn. It includes the thousands of Americans who marched in the streets and demanded an end to family separation, and it includes millions of Americans who want our leaders in Washington to finally affirm the incredible value that immigrants provide for our country.

I want all of you to know that I stand with you. You are on the right and just side of history.

I will keep calling on us to hold this administration accountable to our

American values, and I will keep calling on Congress to uphold our end of the bargain and finally act to reform our broken immigration system. That should start by passing the Dream Act.

We also need to address the root causes of migration from Central America, including extreme poverty, criminal gangs, and violence. We must make smart investments in real border security and economic development in our border communities. We need to provide the necessary medical and humanitarian resources to our border region, particularly for the rugged, back-country terrain we have in my State.

I will never stop fighting for policies that respect the dignity of immigrants, recognize the real needs of our vibrant border communities, and live up to our true American values.

Unfortunately, I don't think we will ever have a productive path forward on any of these urgent matters with this President and his administration. That is true no matter who President Trump ultimately shuffles into the role of Acting Homeland Security Secretary, but it is especially true if the President chooses Chad Wolf.

When Senator ROSEN questioned Mr. Wolf in the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee about the role he played in family separation and other cruel immigration policies, Mr. Wolf said: "My job wasn't to determine if it was the right or wrong policy." In other words, folks, he was just following orders.

I think it is clear that the Trump administration has shown an appalling disregard for basic human dignity. Now the Senate has confirmed someone who will simply rubberstamp the continued failures of this administration.

I should also note that the current pending vote on the floor is for a judicial nominee, Steven Menashi, who has also played a role in the administration's shameful immigration policies. As a counsel in the Trump administration, Mr. Menashi has acknowledged that he advised Stephen Miller on immigration policy, and he has a long record of opposing the basic human and civil rights of people of color, women, LGBTQ Americans, and immigrants.

As the general counsel at the Department of Education under Betsy DeVos, he played a leading role in trying to deny debt relief to students defrauded by for-profit colleges.

I can't believe that we as the Senate can allow these types of appointments to keep going forward. We should not let this go on. This is not who we are as a country, and this is not the America that I know and love.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, we just celebrated Veterans Day here in the Senate, back home, and across our great country in the States that all of us represent. Everybody was celebrating our troops, our military, and supporting their families.

You hear that word "support" a lot when it comes to Veterans Day and our military and their families, but I am going to talk a little bit about that rhetoric. That is great. Senators talk a lot. But that is very disconnected from what actually is going on in the Senate right now and what is happening in terms of the action of supporting our troops.

I came to the floor a couple of weeks ago to talk about this. I was pretty fired up. I am someone who is very collegial with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, but the one thing I have noticed is that there is talk on supporting troops and then there is action. The rhetoric, particularly with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, doesn't always match what is actually happening.

I would like to explain to my constituents at home, the American people, and anyone watching what is happening right now with regard to supporting our troops—the action, not rhetoric—the action. Two weeks ago, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle filibustered the Defense appropriations bill. That is the bill that funds our troops. We had a big budget deal. We all agreed to it.

It is hard to vote for it. I voted for it because it actually supports rebuilding our military pretty significantly after the Obama-era cuts. I voted for that.

We are starting to bring up these minibus appropriations. We had one a couple of weeks ago. We debated and voted on it. The plan was to bring up the Defense approps bill. What did my colleagues on the other side of the aisle do? They filibustered it. It was the ninth time since I have been in the Senate that my colleagues decided to filibuster the spending for our troops. There is no other bill in the body of the Senate that the Democrats filibuster more than the bill that funds our troops. They don't want you to know that. They don't go home and brag about it because they should be ashamed about it, but that is what they did.

Despite this budget deal and despite all of this great support for our troops, right now, my colleagues, for the ninth time since I have been a Senator, which is 5 years—nine times they filibustered the spending for the men and women who serve in the military. I ask the leaders to come out and explain that to the American people. Explain that to the press. Explain that to the people watching on TV. They don't. I think most of my colleagues don't want to do it, but they are told to do it because their leadership wants another priority. That is what is happening.

They talk about supporting our troops, but then the action is that we

are actually not supporting our troops at all. We are keeping funding away from them because we are trying to leverage the desire to support our military and a Defense appropriations bill for other political goals. This has happened nine times.

There is no other bill since I have been elected to the Senate that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle filibuster more. When they want leverage on a nonmilitary issue, they filibuster spending for the troops. I would welcome some of my colleagues to come and explain why they do that. That is one issue.

Another issue is not my colleagues in the Senate, but it is certainly the Democrats on the other side of Capitol Hill. We are now debating the National Defense Authorization Act—the NDAA, as we call it. This is the heartbeat of the Congress. Why? It has passed this body 58 years in a row. That is the closest thing we have to a guarantee in this body. Members—Democrats and Republicans—come together, and we set forward—coming out of the Armed Services Committee, on which I sit—the NDAA, which oversees, reforms, and authorizes important programs for our national defense and sets spending authorization for the entire military. Again, this process is normally very bipartisan, and it has been and continues to be in the Senate.

I give Chairman INHOFE, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, my good friend from Oklahoma, and Senator REED from Rhode Island, the ranking member, enormous credit for getting a bill that came out of committee 25 to 2. That is very bipartisan. Then, when it came to the Senate floor, it was 86 to 8. OK. That is the Senate saying: Hey, this is really important. We are going to take care of our military. We are going to lay out the policies and the topline numbers for rebuilding our military after the massive cuts from 2010 to 2015. So that is positive.

Why am I complaining about it? Well, that bill right now on the House side, as we have gone into conference, is stuck. It is stuck. Many of the more extreme Members on the House side, who really aren't big supporters of the military—let's call a spade a spade—are now not allowing us to move forward on any kind of compromise in the broader NDAA as we move into conference.

There are provisions that are very important to the military that this body strongly supported in a bipartisan way, but right now, because of what is going on in the House—the leadership in the House, which seems to be a lot more focused on other issues and not the national security of our Nation, is not moving forward on any compromise. Who does this benefit? Well, it certainly doesn't help our troops. It certainly doesn't help our military. It certainly doesn't help their families. I can guarantee you, whether it is our adversaries or potential adversaries—

Russia, China, North Korea, or Iran—as they are watching the stalemate on the NDAA, they are very pleased.

This is something we need to come together and address. I am asking the chairman of the Armed Services Committee over on the House side, Chairman ADAM SMITH, and others to work with the Senate, work with Chairman INHOFE, work with Senator REED on getting to the compromises we all know we need to move this bill for the fifth year in a row to support our military. We think that should be based on the Senate bill.

When you have 86 Senators vote for something—a superbipartisan majority—that should be the basis for compromise. But it is stalled. The chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Chairman INHOFE, has done a great job. He is a very patient man. He and Senator REED, the ranking member on the Armed Services Committee, are frustrated. We are frustrated. The troops are frustrated. We don't have much time to waste.

Again, I would like to conclude by saying that there is a lot of rhetoric here. There is a lot of rhetoric about supporting our troops. But what we need is action. By the way, I think a lot of times my colleagues are like, well, you know the men and women in the military are not really watching this. They don't really know that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have filibustered the funding for what they need nine times in the last 4½ years—nine times. It is disgraceful, in my view. People think, well, they are not really watching what is going on with the NDAA, how the extreme elements of the Democratic Party and the House side are making sure there is no compromise so that we can't move this bill. Guess what. They are watching. They know this.

When they don't get support from the Congress of the United States, it is a problem for our military, not just in terms of the resources they need but in terms of morale. I am going to ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: The next time you go home and give speeches about supporting our troops, supporting our families, do me a favor. Don't come back to this body and filibuster their spending or, for the Members of the House, don't stake out such obstinate positions that you know there is going to be no compromise on an NDAA bill that is really important to our military and has strong bipartisan support in this body.

I know some of my other colleagues are going to be on the floor talking about this NDAA issue, talking about the Defense appropriations issue. Again, let's match the rhetoric we all talked about with regard to Veterans Day—about supporting our troops—with action on the floor, not just hot air and words.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I am here to speak about the topic of

healthcare, but while my friend from Alaska is on the floor, I hope we can bridge the policy disagreements we have right now over the Defense appropriations bill, the appropriations process and the authorization bill.

I have been in Congress long enough to have heard this argument be trotted out over and over again that if you vote against a defense bill, then you aren't supporting the troops, even if you have a legitimate policy disagreement you are trying to work out. I have heard that enough to know that it just doesn't match up with reality.

I was told that because I opposed the Iraq war, I didn't support the troops. People in the 1970s were told that if they didn't support the Vietnam war, they were opposing the troops. The fact is, we have a legitimate policy disagreement that we are trying to figure out. Democrats don't think we should be taking money from defense construction projects that are housing and protecting our troops to be used to build a border wall with Mexico that doesn't do anything, in our opinion, to protect the United States compared to the benefit of the spending on military construction projects. We think that, ultimately, we are serving our troops by making sure those military construction projects get funded instead of this wall that doesn't make sense if not for the President's campaign speeches.

So we have some policy disagreements over the budget. I would hope that my colleagues wouldn't try to use this tired argument that if anyone here ever votes against a defense budget, then they somehow are opposing the troops. That is just irresponsible and disingenuous rhetoric.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, I am here to talk about a few patients from Connecticut. We on the Democratic side are trying to put a face to this campaign that the President is engaged in to try to weaken and ultimately eliminate the Affordable Care Act. Right now there is a court case proceeding through the appellate courts that, if successful, would immediately end the Affordable Care Act, which provides insurance to 20 million Americans and makes sure that everybody in this country with a pre-existing condition doesn't get charged more. The President has weighed in on behalf of that lawsuit. He hopes it will succeed.

If it does succeed, we are going to have a humanitarian catastrophe in this country if 20 million people lose their insurance and, once again, insurance companies are allowed to charge you more if you have a sickness or a sick child. We want to make sure we put a face on who is going to be affected if President Trump's sabotage campaign against the Affordable Care Act succeeds.

I know my colleagues have remarks and are lined up to speak, so let me be as brief as I can. I want to tell you the story of just a couple of patients from Connecticut. I am going to cheat and

make this “Patients of the Day.” These are folks who reached out to my office to tell me their story.

Jason is from South Windsor, CT. He says:

I am 54 years old and I have been purchasing insurance since I entered the workforce at 22 years old. I have arthritis that is manageable with medication. Without that medication and care from my physician, I would not be able to function. I would have difficulty with simple tasks like walking and shaking hands.

There is no question that I rely on my insurance. If I were denied coverage because of my preexisting condition, it would be devastating.

Jason is one of the tens of millions of Americans who, without the protections from the Affordable Care Act, would likely not be able to get insurance. He is perhaps months away from that reality.

Lisa, from New Britain, writes on behalf of her grandkids. Because some young kids can't speak for themselves, their parents and grandparents speak for them. Lisa is the proud grandmother of two little girls who were born with cystic fibrosis. She worried that if her son ever had to switch jobs and change insurance plans or if the preexisting condition clause was struck down by the courts, he would be denied coverage because of their preexisting condition. She says:

The girls are doing so well and thriving with the current treatment and medicine they are on. People with cystic fibrosis are now living longer than ever because of medicine available to them. We've worked so hard in keeping them healthy. If this policy of allowing insurance companies to deny people with preexisting conditions or capping lifetime maximums is allowed, you would be taking the lives of our family members.

Finally, Giuseppina, who is a concerned sister in Bridgeport writes:

My youngest brother was born 2.5 months premature in 1977. He spent two months in the hospital and reached his lifetime limit from my father's employer-provided insurance before he left the hospital! In January of 1978, he was diagnosed with hydrocephalus due to underdevelopment or birth trauma.

Due to the massive medical debt accrued from his multiple surgeries and hospital stays, my family had to receive public assistance. . . . My father used to cry when he went food shopping.

I want you to remember that reality. Remember the reality of millions of families who went bankrupt, who lost all their savings, who went on public assistance because they had massive medical debt due to the fact that they lost coverage because of a preexisting condition or lifetime or annual caps.

All of that can come back if the Affordable Care Act is struck down. It is important for us to come down to the floor and remind folks about the human face of healthcare repeal and the consequences if we don't stand together and at least try to make a plan for what will happen if the lawsuit is successful and the Affordable Care Act is struck down by the court system.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, on that topic, of course, all Members of the Senate have said they are preserving the coverage of preexisting conditions. It is sort of like the same speech our friend from Connecticut said he was tired of hearing about supporting the troops when you don't do everything you can to pass the Defense bill. It is at least as old as that—maybe older—and often as tiring.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. President, in the shadow of Veterans Day, we are here on our side of the aisle to talk about why we are not doing what we need to be doing to fund the military. In my following Senator SULLIVAN, there are multiple DAN SULLIVANS who are in politics in Alaska. The first time Senator DAN SULLIVAN was on my radar, how could I tell them apart? This one is Afghan Dan. There is Afghan Dan because he was willing to serve just like the Presiding Officer was willing to leave law school and not go to the JAG Corps but to go to the Active, fighting forces of the country. We are grateful for that. Both of them speak with authority on these issues, but the whole Senate and the whole Congress would have a chance to speak with authority on these issues if we would just decide to do our jobs.

The way communities decide they are going to honor Veterans Day, I think, is unique among them. I had a couple of events scheduled on Monday. One was in Hartville, MO. Those in Hartville were creating a wall of people over the history of the country who died in service. If you are in elementary school in Hartville today and you look at that wall, I am confident you will see some of the same last names of the kids in your school.

I was at a high school event in Camdenton at which we had about 20 World War II veterans on the stage. I represent 500,000 veterans. My guess is the chances of finding 20 in 1 county in 1 State is fairly hard to do these days, but they were all there. We were also talking about the beginning of a new Junior ROTC Program at that high school that will start in January. There are 82 high school students who are signed up to be part of that Junior ROTC Program, which they have spent 10 years trying to put in place.

For those who have served and for those who are willing to serve, the one thing we can do in Congress is to pass the two pieces of legislation that are necessary to support that service. Unlike in World War II and unlike in many past conflicts, fewer than one-half of 1 percent of the population today serves in the military. The other 99.5 percent needs to stand up and do what it can to be sure our military is the best supported military in the world. We never want an American soldier, sailor, airman, marine, or a person in the Coast Guard, in the National Guard, or in the Reserves to be in a fair fight. We always want them to be in an unfair fight, wherein they have advantages in that fight.

The only way you can be sure they will have those advantages is to have the training dollars, to have the equipment dollars, and to have the command structure that allows that to happen. For 59 straight years, the Senate has passed the National Defense Authorization Act. This is the act that defines what Congress believes should be the guiding principles for the military for that year—the places in which money should be invested, the equipment that should be bought, and the other changes that need to be made.

The other bill we passed is the appropriations bill that takes that authorization bill and really puts the money by it that allows it to happen. For 59 straight years, it is the only authorization act we have passed every year. I think we could have a really good debate as to why it is the most important of what we do and is the most important thing the Federal Government does. We have done it, but we can't seem to get it done this year. The bill that will have the biggest pay raise in a decade for the people in the military has somehow been negotiated since, roughly, June 27 of this year. It should have been a 1-week effort, not a weeks' and months' effort. When somebody is assigned to a new base, this bill will have the money in it to encourage spouses to go to work and do what they do as quickly as they can possibly do it by the bill's facilitating and expediting State certification.

In January, we had our first military spouse sworn in as a member of the Missouri bar. Her husband had come to take a command position at Fort Leonard Wood. During the first week she was in Missouri, she was able to be sworn in to the Missouri bar and go to work. Whether as a therapist, a teacher, a truckdriver, an electrician, an engineer, or a welder, if you have those skills and if you have followed your spouse to a new assignment, we should make that a top priority.

That is what happens in this bill. It supports the readiness center in Springfield, MO. It supports the vehicle maintenance facility at Whiteman Air Force Base and the C-130 flight simulator facility at the Rosecrans Air National Guard Base. As a Senate, we decided all of those things needed to happen. Now we need to decide as a Senate and a Congress how to make them happen. Whether they be 24 F/A-18 Super Hornets that the Navy wants that will be built in St. Louis, MO, or 15 F-15s for the Air Force, these things will not happen unless they are authorized. Let's get them authorized. Let's appropriate the money. We are already weeks late. We don't need to be months late. It is better to have the money the day you are supposed to have it if you are going to spend it as wisely as we would hope you would be able to spend it.

I join my colleagues and, I know, the Presiding Officer in saying we need to get this work done. It is critical. It is

a priority. I am glad to join my colleagues on the floor in fighting for those who fight for us.

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

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I join the Senator from Missouri, the Senator from Alaska, and the other Senators in calling for the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act.

This bill is the last of a breed. It is a bill we have passed with a large bipartisan majority in Congress every single year for 58 straight years. It hasn't been derailed by petty, partisan politics or grievances between the parties. It has gotten large bipartisan majorities because Congress has understood that for those 58 years, the national defense must come before politics. It is the definition of a must-pass act, but time is short to get it right, unfortunately, because of those very kinds of petty, partisan politics.

This bill is an opportunity for us to continue rebuilding our military after 8 years of stagnation and cuts by the last administration. The bill would increase funding to our troops by \$22 billion—money that would be spent on cutting-edge technologies, like new vertical-lift jet engines, to give our troops an edge in future conflicts.

This kind of investment is essential, especially as storm clouds brew in the Western Pacific from a rising China. The Communist Party of China is not derailed by petty, partisan politics; therefore, it is investing huge sums to transform its military into a world-class force that will be capable of rivaling and, it hopes, ultimately, of defeating our own military. At the same time, China is pursuing an aggressive technology strategy to dominate the next generation of military hardware. Beijing's ultimate goal, of course, is to replace us not just as the most powerful country in the Western Pacific but in the entire world. So we must invest in our military right now or else we will reap that whirlwind in the future.

There are many other important measures that have been included in this year's Defense bill that will not pass—that will not even see the light of day—on the Senate floor if we fail to pass the bill.

There is the Fentanyl Sanctions Act, which is my bipartisan legislation, that would crack down on foreign criminals—mostly Chinese—who smuggle deadly poisons across our border. Synthetic opioids kill tens of thousands of Americans every year, and that toll will continue to rise if we don't start to bust up the criminal networks that originate in China and then come through Mexico to poison our communities. Let's pass the Defense bill to give law enforcement the tools of the Fentanyl Sanctions Act.

There is also the PCS Act, which is my legislation that would help military spouses transfer their occupational licenses across State lines. When your husband or your wife is in the military, you follow his or her career,

and if you are a lawyer or a nurse or a teacher or any of the other hundreds of jobs that require an occupational license in this country, you face barriers to working and putting food on the table for your family. This bill would allow military spouses to continue to pursue their careers uninterrupted, which would therefore allow their military servicemembers to focus on their own missions and not worry about their spouses' jobs.

There is also our legislation to honor the 241 American victims of the Beirut marine barracks bombing that was perpetrated by an Iranian suicide bomber 36 years ago last month. The Defense bill would designate the anniversary of that bombing as a national day of remembrance and strengthen our resolve to fight the terrorist forces that carried it out and that threaten our security to this day.

There is also the opportunity to strengthen trade restrictions on Huawei by including in the Defense bill the Defending America's 5G Future Act. Huawei is the eyes and ears overseas of the Communist Party of China, so we must deny it access to our sensitive networks and the networks of our allies. There are 91 Senators who voted to instruct the conference committee to include that legislation in the Defense bill. They still hope it will be included, but, first, we will have to pass the Defense bill. If we don't, then China's spy company stands to gain.

This is far from an exhaustive list of the reforms that are or could be included in this year's Defense bill. It is just a sample of the many valuable and bipartisan measures that are under consideration. They also underscore the importance of passing the Defense bill in the first place.

Consider the alternative to passing the National Defense Authorization Act—that being a terrible stopgap spending measure that would include zero reforms and that would degrade, even as we face rising threats from China and Russia every day, the fighting capability of our military. A stopgap spending measure would freeze defense spending at last year's levels. That is not to say that business would go on as usual. No. Inflation would continue to erode the purchasing power of last year's funding levels, and the military would have to tear up and renegotiate many of its multiyear contracts with defense companies. Renegotiating those contracts would cost billions in administrative expenses that would otherwise go to the pay and benefits of our fighting men and women, to a new aircraft, to new ships, to new guns, or to new munitions. This so-called spending freeze would, in fact, cost taxpayers an arm and a leg.

This is all the more reason for Congress to act, once again, to pass the National Defense Authorization Act, as we have for 58 years, without being divided by petty, partisan politics.

I urge my colleagues to put aside their partisan objections on issues that

are really not even related to our military. I urge them to make the hard compromises necessary in order to pass this bill and give our troops what they need.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, the world is more dangerous today than at any time in my lifetime. We face five threats across five domains: China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and terrorism. The domains have gotten very complicated—air, land, sea. Now we have to deal with cyber and space.

But in that background, three times over the last 50 years, this government, under the leadership of three different Presidents, has disinvested its military significantly—under President Carter, under President Clinton, and indeed under President Obama. They cut the military by 25 percent at least in each one of those administrations.

The last one was extremely draconian. We saw the impact of that on our readiness, the fact that our modernization program had been killed, and we found ourselves falling behind what we ought to now call near-peer competitors. I would say they are peer competitors now. When you look at the money China is spending on their military, when adjusted for purchasing power parity, it is exactly the same as we are spending. And they don't have the regulatory overhang and they don't have the legacy costs we have here in the United States, so they can get things done quicker and cheaper. In the meantime, the world continues to become very dangerous.

Yet here we are in the second month of our fiscal year under a continuing resolution. As we now are becoming educated about, this is devastating our military and has been. This is the 187th time since the 1974 Budget Act was put into place that we have executed a continuing resolution. It sounds really easy. Well, we can't get agreement on how much to spend for the next year, so we will just keep spending at the same level. Some businesses do that, but in this case with the U.S. military, it is devastating because it locks them into existing programs.

For example, we did an audit last year. It was the first audit in the history of the United States of the Department of Defense—the third largest line item on our expense sheet. We did an audit. In that audit was found and identified by the Department of Defense \$4 billion of obsolete programs that nobody really wanted to keep and continue spending on—\$4 billion a year. So right now, under this continuing

resolution, not only are we not able to give a 3.5-percent pay raise—the largest in 10 years—to our military, not only are we not able to improve their housing, but right now we are obliged to keep spending \$4 billion a year on obsolete programs that the Defense Department doesn't even want. This is ludicrous.

Right now, I would say we are in gridlock. We had 88 votes here in this Senate where we voted to approve the National Defense Authorization Act several weeks ago—very bipartisan, negotiating in committee. I was on the Armed Services Committee, and we took this very seriously. We debated, and it was a definite fight, but we reached compromise. We reached bipartisan agreement to support and defend our military and to make sure they are able to do the things they want to do to make us competitive and defend our country. Yet here we are, 6 weeks into this fiscal year, and we still don't have this year funded. We are under a continuing resolution that devastates the military. For six decades—58 years—each year we have been able to do that. Yet, this year, we can't seem to come to an agreement because the House and the Senate can't get together in conference and agree on exactly what it is they want to do.

That is all window dressing. It is no more complicated than this: The Democratic brethren in this body and in the House simply do not want to allow this President to spend another dime on building a wall around our southern border.

Let's put this in perspective. First of all, we have seen on this floor just in the last 2 hours two different comments: Well, we all know that building a border wall doesn't really work. It doesn't change anything.

Well, that is absolute propaganda. Barack Obama built 135 miles of wall. This body approved that. And wherever that wall was built, illegal crossings at the southern border went down 95 percent. That is not propaganda; that is fact. It is another example of the obstructionism we have been witnessing here since the day this President was sworn in.

On Inauguration Day, January 20, 2017, the headline of the Washington Post was "The campaign to impeach President Trump has begun." Since day one, they have been obstructing this President. We saw that in the confirmation process here. For the first time in 230 years, we saw the minority party not waive the 30-hour debate rule and allow this President to get his nominees confirmed. It has been the slowest ever.

So we sit here today not being able to build the space force that both sides have agreed on. Eighty-eight people in this body agreed that we need to go ahead and start spending money and doing that. We can't do that. We can't put in the building blocks for the Advanced Battle Management System, which is so important to deal with the

modern fight. We can't rebuild our nuclear triad, which is in absolutely critical shape. We can't seem to get at our readiness right now because of the lock we have, under this continuing resolution, on the existing contracts out there. As was just mentioned a few minutes ago, we have to go in and renegotiate all these contracts.

Last year was the first time we did not have a continuing resolution, and there was such a sigh of relief inside our military because it was the first time in a long time—over a decade—that they didn't have that for the first quarter of the year.

This is devastating. It has become habit, and we have to stop it. It is absolutely insidious. It is killing our military and keeping us from doing the things that both sides want to do because of petty politics.

We need to modernize our force, and we need to do it right now. This NDAA allows us to do that. We need to rationalize our expenditures to make sure that every time we are spending on our military, it is exactly what we should be spending it on.

We have a Volunteer Force, and we can never take that for granted. We have to take care of our people in uniform wherever they are in the world. That means working on their mental health, their physical health, and their housing.

I come from a State that has nine military installations. We take national defense very seriously in Georgia and always have.

People are concerned that this gridlock is endangering our country. It is time that we get together, pass this NDAA, move on the appropriations bill, and get this done. People back home are watching, the people in our military are watching, and more importantly, our potential adversaries are watching.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I want to join my colleagues today and speak on the importance of passing the fiscal year 2020 Defense authorization bill.

As others have mentioned, the process of negotiating the national defense bill is one that has a long history on Capitol Hill. For the past 58 years, the Congress has found a way to come together and unite behind a bipartisan bill that supports our servicemembers and enables the defense of this Nation. We must continue this tradition, and that means recommitting to the principles of bipartisanship and compromise upon which it is built.

Thanks in large part to the hard work and the leadership of Chairman JIM INHOFE and Ranking Member JACK REED and the members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Senate passed an overwhelmingly bipartisan version of this year's National Defense Authorization Act. The House of Representatives, however, passed a very different bill. The conference process is

ultimately about finding the best solution that supports our men and women in uniform, but we have to be willing to compromise and find consensus. We cannot resort to political brinksmanship.

As the chairman said last week and as some of my colleagues have mentioned here today, we are running out of time. It is essential that our colleagues in the House come to the table to pass the fiscal year 2020 NDAA.

We live in a rapidly changing world and unfortunately one that contains a growing number of threats and challenges that our military must face head-on. These threats demand that we be ready, and our military can effectively confront those threats only if we provide our servicemembers with the support they need to execute the missions, defeat the enemies of freedom, and safeguard the Nation.

Providing for the common defense is the highest responsibility this body has, and that is why it is so essential that we pass this legislation in a timely manner.

As I said before, for 58 years the NDAA has been the subject of a bipartisan consensus in Congress despite all of our other disagreements. No matter what other issues arise, the one area in which we must forge agreement is in authorizing the resources our men and women in uniform need.

Time and again, we have heard from our senior military leaders that their greatest obstacle is budget uncertainty and unpredictable funding. If we do not come together and pass this year's NDAA soon, we are at risk of damaging our military capabilities and jeopardizing our ability to confront threats from China, Russia, and other malign actors.

It is essential that we work swiftly to secure an agreement so that we do not fail to provide the Department of Defense with the predictable funding they need. We must do our part and honor the service of all our men and women in uniform by moving this process forward and passing the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, first, I want to thank Senator FISCHER for all of her work on the Senate Armed Services Committee and in so many other areas. I am here to talk about the same subject, the National Defense Authorization Act.

It may be difficult to understand the difference between appropriating and authorizing. We have two different sorts of committees here. One focuses on the resources funding their use, but they can't be used unless they are authorized. So every year for 58 years, we have come into the committee, we have heard differing opinions on priorities, but at the end of the day, the amazing thing about the Senate Armed Services Committee when it comes to

the National Defense Authorization Act is that we always reach a bipartisan agreement. It passed out of the Senate Armed Services Committee with I believe unanimous support, and then it got passed out of the Senate.

Normally, this happens in the June timeframe, maybe the July timeframe. Now here we are in November. Not only have we not passed the National Defense Authorization Act, but we are at risk of not passing anything. Now what we are hearing about is a so-called skinny bill that would just be the basic authorities while we are leaving everything else on the table.

I am going to talk a little bit about the Personnel Subcommittee, which I chair, but what do authorities mean? It means research on new weapons systems. It means research for men and women in a dangerous situation to make sure the best possible technology and training is available to make it as safe as it can be in an unsafe environment. There are hundreds of authorizations in the National Defense Authorization Act that are at risk of sliding another year for the first time in 58 years.

Now what I want to talk about is what is at stake if we can't reach an agreement with Speaker PELOSI specifically in the Personnel Subcommittee.

I actually requested the Personnel Subcommittee because I wanted to focus on the business of the Department of Defense, and I wanted to focus on military families and on the soldiers' health and safety.

If we do not pass provisions that passed out of my subcommittee and that are in the National Defense Authorization Act that passed out of the Senate, here is what is at stake:

There is a pay raise for every soldier, sailor, and marine—a 3.1-percent pay raise that they could lose this year as a result of not gaining agreement.

We have a lot of provisions in there for military housing. I am from North Carolina, and we have two very large installations in North Carolina—Fort Bragg, the home of the Global Response Force, and Camp Lejeune, home to a bigger population of marines than any military installation in the world.

They are in housing today that needs to be outfitted. They are in housing that, quite honestly, is unsafe. This National Defense Authorization Act makes progress to make sure that the families that are housed on bases are in safe, clean settings, and quite honestly, in some cases, they are not today, which is why we have bipartisan support for the provisions we put into our subcommittee mark.

Another thing that we are working on—it is very difficult for one who doesn't come from a military background to understand how challenging it is for a spouse to get a job for the brief period of time that they may be in one military installation or another. This mark has provisions in it to make sure that military spouses get employ-

ment opportunities as quickly as possible and to cut through a lot of the red tape that they are dealing with today. That provision is at risk.

We have also taken major steps and tried to prevent or reduce military sexual assault. Provisions in this bill, I am convinced, because they were voted out on a bipartisan basis, are at risk because we can't seem to get agreement with Speaker PELOSI's House.

Another very important area is in places like North Carolina. In North Carolina, Camp Lejeune alone experienced over \$3.5 billion in damages as the result of the most recent hurricane, and Fort Bragg is still trying to recover from a hurricane that happened about 2 and a half years ago. There are authorities in there to make sure that we can rebuild these facilities. Military housing, as well as offices and other training facilities at Camp Lejeune, could slip another year if we allow what I think right now is the impasse between the House and the Senate to move forward.

These are all very, very important provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act. These are all provisions that got bipartisan support from this body. If you all have been watching Congress, you know that we can have our disagreements. There are certain things that we just simply aren't going to see eye to eye on, but we see eye to eye on the National Defense Authorization Act. That is why I do not understand how the House would not come to the table and pass something that we have successfully passed for every year of my life.

I am 59 years old. This could be the first time in 58 years that we run the risk of not showing the respect that I think the men and women in the military, in uniform, deserve, to give them the authority to be trained properly, to not run the risk of working with old authorities that could diminish training and readiness and capabilities. This is about these folks that have sworn to defend the Constitution and our freedom, and we can't take the time to bridge the gap and eliminate the other reasons that divide us and at least come together on something for 58 years we have seen our way clear to passing and making progress, for men and women in uniform, for soldiers, sailors, and marines and for their families.

So I am for the Speaker of the House and the Members of the House to come to terms and pass what we have done successfully for decades. We owe it to the men and women in uniform, and we owe it to every American to understand what is at stake if we all of a sudden slide for a year while our adversaries continue to gain ground.

I hope that my colleagues will continue to come together and pass this bipartisan legislation. It is within reach and absolutely an expectation, I think, of every Member of Congress to show our men and women in uniform respect by doing our job.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF STEVEN J. MENASHI

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here to speak on the confirmation of Steven Menashi to be a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. We have grown accustomed to the violations of norms around here, kind of a dumbing down of the institution. So by all of those standards, I would ordinarily be opposing Mr. Menashi.

We have disposed of the blue slip convention for Circuit Court nominees. I just warn my colleagues, again, that there is a price to be paid for that. The blue slip for Circuit Court nominees is the thing that connects a Circuit Court nominee to a particular State so that an Arkansas judge on the Circuit Court of Appeals or the Rhode Island judge on our Circuit Court of Appeals or the Montana judge on their Circuit Court of Appeals only is the Arkansas judge or the Rhode Island judge or the Montana judge because we honor that blue slip.

In another Presidency, when the shoe is on the other foot, I don't want to hear any of my colleagues who have thrown this Circuit Court blue slip out complain when somebody who is not even from their State gets appointed to the so-called State seat on the Circuit Court.

In addition, we have dealt with a lot of unqualified candidates. I think this administration has set the record for ABA-designated unqualified candidates. This guy has never tried a case, never taken a deposition. He effectively has not practiced law. When he has tried to practice law, it has been a disaster. He has been the counsel for the Department of Education and managed to have various programs that he advised on all thrown out in court and his Secretary held in contempt—so not a guy who, when you get a mere legal decision, comes up with a real winning record.

Moreover, he refused, extremely arrogantly, to answer really basic questions, even to the point of frustrating Republican members of the committee when he was a witness before us, and has refused to answer related questions for the record as well.

So, for all of those reasons, this is a pretty undesirable candidate for the Federal bench, but it gets way, way worse. If you look at what Mr. Menashi has said over the years, it is quite an astonishing window into his mind. With respect to affirmative action, he has compared universities—I am quoting him here—he has compared universities cataloging students according to race on college applications

and official documents, which you obviously do as part of any affirmative action program, he has compared that to the Nuremberg laws.

If you look at the issue of sexual violence, he has made fun of Take Back the Night marches and described women who are active and concerned about sexual violence as—his words here—“campus gynocentrics”—maybe he pronounced it gynocentrics, I do not know—campus gynocentrics. When you are talking about sexual violence, that is not just a normal word to use. When you are talking about affirmative action, reference to Nazi Nuremberg laws is just not normal.

He has argued that gun regulations are “pointless”—I am quoting him here—“pointless and self-defeating because guns reduce crime.” Really? Ask the victims of the firearms massacres happening at such a horrifying rate in this country how guns reduce crime.

With respect to the rights that have been enshrined in our Constitution and recognized in *Roe v. Wade*, giving women the right, to some degree, of self-determination about when to have children, he described the rights codified in *Roe v. Wade*—I quote him here—as “radical abortion rights advocated by campus feminists.” Good luck, on an issue related to a woman’s right to choose, getting a fair hearing from this character once he is enrobed.

He mocked the gay rights group Human Rights Campaign, which he said incessantly exploited the slaying of Matthew Shepard for both financial and political benefit. We engage in some pretty acid rhetoric around here, but about a young man who was murdered about being gay, that is just appalling. If you are in his court on an issue in which the rights of LGBT folks are involved, there is almost no way that you could believe that a judge that has thought or said anything as vile as that could ever give you a fair hearing.

With respect to the question of diversity, which many of us consider to be one of America’s greatest traits, social scientists, he said, have found that greater ethnic heterogeneity, i.e., social diversity, is associated with lower social trust. Ethnically heterogenous societies exhibit less political and civic engagement, less effective government institutions, and fewer public goods.

First of all, I don’t think that is true. I don’t think that stands to scrutiny. But, second of all, it is just kind of a creepy thing to be saying, that we would be a better country if we marshaled ourselves together into our ethnic enclaves, which “provide the groundwork for social trust and political solidarity”—not in my world, not in Rhode Island. That is not the way we work. I don’t think that is the way America works.

So whether you are looking at diversity, whether you are looking at gay rights, whether you are looking at a woman’s right to choose, whether you are looking at safe regulation of guns,

whether you are looking at sexual violence against women, whether you are looking at affirmative action in colleges, you can find something truly creepy that this individual has said. That, on top of all the other disqualifying factors, makes him perhaps the worst candidate that Donald Trump has tried to put on the Federal bench—by the way, that is in a crop of doozies.

The problem here is that people are going to come into these courts and they are going to have a feeling that no American litigant should have and that is that I have got a judge who is predisposed against me, that it doesn’t matter what my cause is. It matters who I am.

And, sadly, I don’t think this is the bug in these Trump judicial appointments; I think this is the feature. I think it is the intention of the dark money fueled apparatus that has got this assembly line of unusual and peculiar judges cranked on to our courts to actually make sure that our courts are more likely to rule for certain people than others, that they are more likely to rule for polluters, that they are more likely to rule for gun companies, that they are more likely to rule for dark money political operators.

There are essentially, at this point, with this nominee to a Circuit Court of Appeals, no standards left—no standards left. I can’t imagine anybody much worse.

It is a sad day.

With that, I yield the floor.

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

S. 2330

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, today in the Commerce Committee, following an in-depth 18-month investigation to examine cultural and systemic issues regarding abuse in the Olympic movement, Senator BLUMENTHAL and I introduced bipartisan legislation, the Empowering Olympic and Amateur Athletes Act of 2019. It was accompanied by an investigative report, findings, and recommendations. I am pleased that the Commerce Committee approved that legislation today. This marks a significant step forward to improving the protections and representations provided to our amateur athletes.

The subcommittee that I chair exercises jurisdiction over the U.S. Olympic Committee and amateur sports at large, and I remain fully committed to ensuring the health and safety of all American athletes. Our Empowering Olympic and Amateur Athletes Act would enact reforms to the U.S. Olympic system by strengthening legal liability and accountability mechanisms, restoring a culture of putting athletes first, and fortifying the independence and capacity of the U.S. Center for Safe Sports.

Our investigation, which led to the foundation of the provisions in this bill, included four subcommittee hearings, interviews with Olympic athletes and survivors, and the retrieval of

70,000 pages of documents. This was also made possible by the supportive leadership of the committee—the chairman and ranking member, Senator WICKER and Senator CANTWELL—and the contributions of the committee staff, including the contributions of my staff and those of former Chairman THUNE and Ranking Member NELSON.

Also, I want to take this moment to thank Mr. GRASSLEY, the Senator from Iowa and the chairman now of the Finance Committee. For a portion of the time we were dealing with this issue, he was the chairman of the Judiciary Committee. He, too, made contributions to our legislation, and his continued leadership on this issue in general has helped to move this bill forward and out of the committee today.

During our investigation, Senator GRASSLEY indicated an interest in working together to protect amateur athletes. After we introduced the legislation, I am pleased we were able to include provisions from his legislation that was just introduced yesterday here in the Senate. Specifically, the substitute amendment included funding accountability language for safe sports, clarification on mandatory reporting parties related to child abuse, and new reporting requirements to improve transparency. Senator GRASSLEY was also successful in working with Senator PETERS to include whistleblower protection language in the bill during today’s markup.

Again, I thank Senator GRASSLEY for his leadership and commitment to the health and safety of our amateur athletes.

Additionally, there were thoughtful contributions to our legislation—most recently, in the form of our substitute amendment—from other members of the Commerce Committee, including Senator GARDNER of Colorado.

I also thank my colleague Senator BLUMENTHAL, the ranking member of the subcommittee, for his steadfast and ongoing support and leadership that he has shown throughout this long process.

This investigation and legislative process started out as a bipartisan effort to provide substantive policy protections to amateur athletes and has remained as such. That bipartisanship has continued and will continue to be prioritized as we push for timely consideration of this legislation on the Senate floor.

Finally, I would be remiss not to express my sincere and humble thanks to the survivors for their bravery in guiding our policymaking with their testimonies and ongoing input throughout the process. Their willingness to recount and relive their traumatic experiences played a vital role in informing Congress as it seeks to address key reporting, governance, and resource issues within the Olympic system. This critical legislation would not have happened without their active involvement.

I will never forget the question that was asked of me by one of the survivors

as we were gathered together in the Russell Senate Office Building. The question was this: Why was there more than one? It is a question we would always hope to answer. There should never be a victim or survivor of sexual abuse. And if there is one, there should never be a second.

The sad thing about this circumstance in which we found ourselves and in which the athletes found themselves was that not only was there one, but there were many more. We should be able to take that call—why was there ever more than one?—and make certain that we do everything to keep it from ever happening again.

I thank my colleagues in the Commerce Committee for their support on this critical legislation. I look forward to working with the leader and my Senate colleagues as we push to enact these necessary reforms.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, before I get into my comments on Agent Orange, I just want to thank Senator MORAN and Senator BLUMENTHAL for leading the charge on making sure that our Olympic athletes are protected. There are some who say that government has no business in this realm; I couldn't disagree with them more. The fact is, this is a wrong that I think Senator MORAN and Senator BLUMENTHAL have tried to right. I just want to thank them for their leadership.

Mr. MORAN. I thank the Senator.

AGENT ORANGE

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I stand here today because the Trump administration continues to turn its back on our Nation's veterans, many who are suffering from illnesses relating to Agent Orange.

Agent Orange is a very toxic defoliant that was used in Vietnam. Everybody who was there was exposed to it because it was used in such great volume.

By denying eligibility to the folks who have suffered from that exposure the benefits and care they need, they are not doing right by our veterans. The fact is, there is no logical reason behind it except for the fact that they don't want to pay for it. They don't think the exposure to these toxic chemicals in Vietnam are a cost of war. Well, they are.

Today, we are telling Acting Chief of Staff and Acting Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney and other White House officials to do their jobs and make sure these veterans are taken care of.

It is time for this White House to do right by the 83,000 veterans—that is 83,000—who are currently suffering and dying from significant health conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure. This administration—the Trump administration—needs to stop ignoring the overwhelming scientific evidence put forth by medical experts, scientists, and veterans.

Internal documents obtained by a veteran through the Freedom of Information Act revealed that in 2017 President Trump's first VA Secretary, Dr. David Shulkin, tried to do right by these veterans. At that time, the VA proposed to expand the list of presumptive health conditions associated with this toxic herbicide to include bladder cancer, Parkinson's-like symptoms, and hypothyroidism so that these veterans could become eligible for the benefits they earned if they had these conditions, but Mick Mulvaney and the White House objected. They didn't want to spend the money. They said they wanted more studies—studies that would have effectively run out the clock as more and more of these veterans suffered and died.

Since then, the National Academy of Medicine found evidence that hypertension has even greater evidence of association to Agent Orange exposure than the conditions Dr. Shulkin attempted to address. Yet the White House still refuses to take care of these veterans. They refuse to expand the list to include these four conditions: parkinsonism, bladder cancer, hypertension, and hypothyroidism.

More have suffered and more have died. These are Vietnam veterans who are in their sixties, seventies, and eighties. But this administration—the same folks who are quick to beg for nearly \$20 billion for an ineffective border wall that Mexico was supposed to pay for and who are happy to put a \$1.5 trillion tax bill on the government's credit card—refuses to recognize that this is a cost of war and that they need to do right by the Vietnam veterans—veterans who have already waited decades for the benefits and the care they desperately need.

It is pretty simple. Do the right thing. If you claim to be an advocate for the veterans, no more excuses and end the wait for these veterans and their families. These veterans and their families have already sacrificed greatly, and they should not be forced to wait 1 minute longer. This issue needs to be dealt with, and it needs to be dealt with today.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH
AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise today to talk about a resolution that I have introduced with my fellow Senator from Maine, SUSAN COLLINS, and 11 other fellow Senators from both sides of the aisle—truly bipartisan—to designate November 2019 as National Homeless Children and Youth Awareness Month.

Specifically, this resolution highlights the issue of children and youth homelessness and supports the efforts of businesses, organizations, educators, and volunteers who are dedicated to meeting the needs of homeless children and youth.

In the 2016-to-2017 school year, there were 1.3 million children and youth—I repeat, 1.3 million children and youth—who experienced homelessness in the United States.

In West Virginia alone, our schools have identified more than 10,500 students experiencing homelessness. This is simply unacceptable, and we must do more to support our future generations. That is why I am a firm believer that there are five promises—five promises—we, as adults, should make to every child.

No. 1 is every child must have an unconditionally loving and caring adult in their life. That is the first. Every child must know that someone loves them unconditionally. No matter what you do and no matter what mistakes you make, at the end of the day, that person loves you. It could be your mom or dad; it could be a grandma or grandpa; it could be an aunt or uncle; or it could be a neighbor, someone who knows they have your back no matter what.

No. 2 is every child must have a safe place to call home where harm cannot enter. I would hope it is the home they live in. Sometimes it is not always the case. Sometimes it might be a school. It might be an after-school program. It could be a church. It could be a neighbor's home. Every child growing up has to have somewhere safe in their life where harm cannot enter and they are protected.

No. 3 is every child must have a healthy start and access to a nutritious diet. I think that is why you have seen in our school systems that we have expanded our nutrition programs from breakfasts to lunches. When I went to school way back when in rural areas, we had no cafeterias and no lunches, but for some reason, I could always tell when my mom or other parents had put an extra sandwich in the lunch pail knowing that we couldn't eat it but somebody could. There were always those who kind of stepped in and helped others.

Now we have that. Every child has to have a healthy start and access to a nutritious diet if they are going to grow and be engaged and, basically, be productive.

No. 4 is every child should be taught a livable skill so that they can make their own way through life. Primary and secondary education is free in America. It makes us different from every other country in the world. We commit to every child that they can get an education to be literate—every child. That is why education should be held to a higher standard to make sure that they have a skill set.

There should be no child graduating from high school who is not ready to

work or ready to learn more. We should be able to identify in 7th, 8th, or 9th grade what their interests are going to be, whether they are going to be skill-set driven or whether they are going to be academically driven. Both are needed, and we should not make them feel like failures if they don't go to college because a lot of people aren't desiring to go to college. A lot of them want to work with their hands. They want the skill sets; they have that ability, and we should identify that very early.

No. 5 is the hardest promise because you cannot teach it. You can't teach this promise that you should keep to every child—that that child should grow to be a loving, caring adult and give something back. They can learn that fifth one only by how you conduct your life, how that special adult in their life—mom, dad, aunt, uncle, cousin, neighbor, after-hours group, school—someone in their life has given them hope: Hey, I can be that person; I can give something back; and I can help somebody like me.

Those are the five promises. If we can't keep those, then God help us all. We owe that to every generation. To have one child homeless in this country is wrong. Homelessness means you have no stability; you have no functional family; and you have no biological mom or dad to go home to. You are either couch surfing or basically living with another relative—whatever it may be—and this is something we have to intervene in and make sure we can correct.

We must keep these promises to our children so that our future generations will grow up to be the best they possibly can and meet all their expectations. We expect our children and youth to care about their education, but if they don't have a roof over their head or a place to sleep, if they don't have adequate nutrition and meals, they can't focus on learning as they should be able to.

I heard one child say: I am just trying to survive. I am just trying to make it through the day and survive. I would love to get the education you want me to get, but when it becomes basically survival tactics or educational tactics, survival will kick in first.

That is what they are dealing with. This crisis is affecting not just these students in their homes, but it affects their school life, too, and we must do better to ensure that they can learn and give back to their communities.

Speaking of doing more, there is a lot of great work being done in my State of West Virginia and nationally and, I am sure, in all the States. One wonderful example is the Children's Home Society in West Virginia. I know they are watching and are gathered for their annual conference today. I want to thank them for the incredible work they have been doing. They have been strong leaders in helping children and families who experience homelessness in West Virginia. We truly appreciate their

leadership on this issue in our State and hope that their work can be used as a standard for the other States to combat this issue.

Recently, I visited South Charleston Middle School to see the work they are doing to address the child and youth homelessness crisis facing our State from the perspective of a student's life, much of which is spent at school. They use Federal funding to help correctly identify students who are homeless so that they can provide services to those who need them.

I hope my resolution will help raise awareness on this issue so that more schools can use the funds available to support the students who are experiencing homelessness. In West Virginia, the child and youth homelessness crisis is intensified by the opioid crisis that has ravaged our State. The lasting effects of the epidemic on our children and future generations are terrible, from the increase in children and youth homelessness to a rise in youth substance use disorder.

This crisis will continue to affect communities like those all across West Virginia for decades to come, which is why we must begin to combat and address issues like child and youth homelessness now.

In the middle of this crisis, there are success stories, too, like Hannah's. Hannah's parents could not care for her because of substance use issues, so she went to live with a family friend, who subsequently removed all support. A high school counselor referred Hannah to the Youth Services System Transitional Living Program, which helped her finish high school and go on to college. She is a recipient of the YSS Ronald Mulholland Futures Scholarship and attends West Virginia University, where she is now a junior studying chemistry. Last summer, she completed an internship in Tennessee.

The Youth Services System is a wonderful national organization that works to provide shelter for children and youth across America. Organizations like the Youth Services System and the Children's Home Society deserve recognition for their incredible work because, without them, success stories like Hannah's and so many others wouldn't even exist. This is why we must raise awareness of this issue so that we can support the wonderful work being done across the United States every day.

I am so proud to be here today to advocate for those 1.3 million children and youth across our Nation who need our help and deserve our help. We must do better for them, and I believe strongly that this resolution is the beginning to work toward solving this major crisis our Nation has with broad bipartisan support. If there is one thing that brings us together, it is the children. It is not a Democrat or Republican problem. It is a problem for all of us. It is an American problem, and we have to face it.

With the support of 23 national organizations, I hope this resolution will

pass quickly. I look forward to working with my colleagues who have signed on to this resolution and those on both sides of the aisle to bring us back together to combat child and youth homelessness.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

5G TECHNOLOGY

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I will talk for a few minutes today about 5G technology and taxpayer money. We have all heard the term "5G." 5G stands for fifth generation—fifth generation technology. In short, what 5G means is incredibly fast data transmission—data going from my cell phone to the President's cell phone, my internet to your internet, and the ability to connect a lot of different devices at the same time.

Through 5G technology, which is wireless technology, we will be able not only to transmit data very quickly, but we will also be able to transmit huge amounts of data—almost breathtaking amounts—and it is going to have a huge impact on American society. It is going to have a huge impact on the world.

In some respects, it is going to change the world. If technology has changed the world thus far—and indeed it has; among other things, it has made the world smaller—5G is going to change it even more. For example, you will be able to use your smartphone to open your garage door. You will be able to use your smartphone and be a mile away but turn on your coffee maker. We will be able to do surgery by internet. Surgeons will be able to be in one place 1,000 miles away from a patient, and that surgeon, through robotics and other means, will be able to transmit the data to operate on that patient.

Driverless cars are going to change the world dramatically—not only the way we get around. It is going to change our need for roads; it is going to change our tax base; and it is going to change the insurance market.

5G is going to allow farmers to be prewarned about encroaching diseases. Farmers will not have to wait to see their crops attacked by certain diseases; through 5G technology, they will be able to know and predict that those diseases are coming. It is going to help us feed the world.

5G technology is going to allow our young people to have virtual apprenticeships. If you are a young woman or a young man and you are right out of school and you are offered an apprenticeship or an internship, let's say in San Francisco, and you are living in Duluth—say you are a student and you say "I don't have the money to move to San Francisco, and I don't have the money to live in San Francisco," you will be able to do an internship through technology.

It is going to be 100 times faster. In terms of the amount of data, I don't know how to quantify that, but it is going to have an extraordinary impact on wireless technology.

What are we talking about here? When my phone calls the President's phone, what are we talking about? Really, we are just talking about radio waves. We are talking about radio waves. A radio wave is nothing more than electromagnetic radiation. I don't want to get off the subject here. When my phone talks to the President's phone, we are just sending radio waves through the air. Sometimes you might have heard that referred to as a spectrum. That is basically how a cell phone and the internet works, except with 5G, the speed with which that data is transmitted and the amount of data will be substantially larger.

Who owns those radio waves and the air through which those radio waves travel? According to Federal law—the Federal Communications Act of 1934—we do. We all do. The American people do.

The Federal Government, through the Federal Communications Commission and other agencies, including but not limited to Congress, regulates those radio waves going through the air, which we call spectrum, but those radio waves and the air through which they pass are owned by the American people. Just like a national park, just like the oil and gas offshore in Federal waters, just like the Rocky Mountains, they are owned by us, the American people.

Now there are certain types of radio waves that are owned by the American people that are perfect for 5G technology. These radio waves and this spectrum, if you will—I will use the term "spectrum," but remember, I am just referring to radio waves moving through the air. This particular spectrum that is perfect for 5G technology is called the C-band. I don't know why they call it that, but that is what they call it. It is between 3.7 gigahertz and 4.2 gigahertz. Don't worry about what that means; just know that this part of the overall spectrum is perfect for 5G. It is perfect because it strikes a balance between coverage and capacity. And this C-band, if you will, is not too hot, not too cold. It is just right for 5G. It is critical to our development of 5G technology.

Since the American people own this C-band and since many of our wireless companies want to develop and offer 5G technology to the American people, given those facts, the FCC is going to play an integral part. The FCC licenses spectrum to companies that want to use it. In other words, if you are a wireless company and you want to use a portion of the spectrum—the radio waves going through the air that are owned by the American people—you go to the FCC and say: I want to license that spectrum, and I want to pay for it.

By law—not by custom; by law—the FCC says: OK. To be fair, we are going to hold an auction, and everybody who wants to bid on this portion of the spectrum can submit a bid.

In the last 25 years, the FCC has done an extraordinary job, by the way, of

getting spectrum out to the private sector and getting the American taxpayer paid for its property interest. In the last 25 years, the FCC has conducted over 100 of these auctions. The FCC has brought in \$123 billion for the American people—billion. That is nine zeros. I have met with folks at the FCC who handle the public auctions. They are incredibly experienced. They know what they are doing.

Let me get back to the C-band. When we left off, we were talking about the C-band being perfect for 5G. We have a lot of wireless companies that want to lease it, if you will—want to license it—and the FCC is there in the middle. You would expect that what we would do in this instance is what we always do—we hold a public auction.

It has been estimated that if we hold a public auction, if the FCC holds a public auction and tells all the wireless companies that want to bid to come on down and bid, it will bring in \$60 billion for the American people—\$60 billion. Do you know what we could do with \$60 billion? With \$60 billion, we could put 1 million kids through college for all 4 years. With \$60 billion, we could hire 1 million new cops for a year. With \$60 billion, we could build 7,000 miles of interstate. With \$60 billion, we could make sure that broadband reaches every crevice and corner of America because right now it doesn't.

If you are in a rural area right now—I don't want to overstate my case, but in many instances, if you are in a rural area, you don't have the same broadband both in terms of reach and coverage and speed that people have in a large city, and that is true even before we get to 5G.

We could even give the money back to people. We have 140 million taxpayers in America. If we gave \$60 billion back to 140 million taxpayers, that is about \$430 for every taxpayer in America. I am not suggesting we do that. That is above my pay grade, making that decision. For a lot of people, \$430 isn't that much money, but I have a lot of friends who would say \$430 is a lot of money.

But in the middle of what I just described, we have a hair on the biscuit. We have three companies—and I am not disparaging them. Two of them are headquartered in Luxembourg, and one is out of Canada. They are foreign satellite companies. They have gone to the FCC and they have said: Look, we are going to make you a deal. We know we need to get this 5G, this C-band spectrum, into the market as quickly as possible. We will do the auction for you.

It doesn't matter that the FCC has already done 100 auctions and brought in \$123 billion. These three foreign companies have gone to the FCC and said: Let us do the auction for you because we can do it better and quicker even though we have never done a public auction.

Then they told the FCC: By the way, we want to keep the money. We can do

it faster than you, FCC. Even though you have done 100-plus auctions and we have never done one, just trust us. We can do it faster than you, and we want you to give us the spectrum and let us keep the \$60 billion.

The FCC is considering doing it.

My State has a lot of oil and gas. The Federal Government—the American taxpayer—owns the seabed of much of the Gulf of Mexico. Periodically, on behalf of the American people, the Federal Government leases that seabed to oil and gas companies to explore for oil and gas. When the Federal Government leases the land, the Federal Government takes an upfront cash payment and a portion of any oil and gas that is found.

Can you imagine what would happen if I went to the Federal Government and said: Even though I have never done an oil and gas auction, I can do it faster than the Federal Government even though the Federal Government has done thousands of them. So I want you to give me all the minerals in the gulf and let me do the auction and keep the money.

Can you imagine the reaction if I approached the Federal Government? The people in charge of those oil and gas leases would do one of two things. I would end up in either handcuffs or a straitjacket. But that is what is being proposed here, and for the life of me, I do not understand why the FCC is taking this seriously.

An article just came out a couple of days ago. I will read the first sentence of it. It came out of a periodical called Market Watch on November 11, just a few days ago.

It starts: "A big step in the U.S. deployment of 5G wireless could take place by year's end as the Federal Communications Commission is expected to back a plan from the satellite industry for auctioning off radio spectrum."

They called a couple of investment bankers. One investment bank group is called Height Capital Markets, and another one is called Beacon Policy Advisors. I don't know where they are getting their information, but they are saying that the FCC has already agreed not to do a public auction but to let these foreign companies have the spectrum and get the \$60 billion.

The article goes on to explain that these three companies—these three foreign companies, the two Luxembourg companies and the Canadian company—spent \$515,000 lobbying regulators and lawmakers on its auction plan.

Then I go back and I look at another article that came out not too long ago, and it talks about one FCC Commissioner. It sounds like he is already sold. He was asked about the idea of just giving the spectrum to these foreign companies and letting them keep the money.

Here is what he said: "Most of the criticism of what is known as the CBA proposal"—that is the proposal by the private companies—"shows a lack of

understanding of how the Internal Commission works. . . . [D]on't let anyone try to lecture me on the commission's . . . efficiency and timeliness.

This Commissioner goes on to say:

If someone or some entities make a profit for being at the right place at the right time, I will live with that outcome. In the grand scheme of things, if it is a contest between speed and government trying to extract a significant piece of the transaction through a lengthy process, I'll take the speedy resolution."

Are you kidding me? What planet did he just parachute in from? This is a current member of the FCC. Somebody needs to tell him about the President's Executive order, right here: "Buy American and Hire American." It doesn't say "hire Luxembourg companies." I have nothing against Luxembourg companies; I just prefer American companies. It doesn't say "buy Canadian companies and hire Canadian."

I can tell you what is going to happen if the FCC does this. First of all, the American people are going to lose \$60 billion. No. 2, they are going to get sued. They say they can do it faster—I don't believe them—but I know this much: I know a little something about litigation. I used to do it for a living. They are going to be tied up in court for about 10 years—I can tell you that—because the Federal Communications Act requires a public auction.

I can tell you what else is going to happen. The people who live in rural communities are going to get the little end of nothing because we won't be able to control who gets this C-band. I will bet you that the companies that end up with it start—and I hope I am wrong—and remain in the cities. So if you live in the country, where I was raised, you won't get the benefit of 5G.

Also, if we give it to these three foreign companies and they get to decide who gets the C-band, how do we control who ends up with our spectrum? What if they give it to Huawei? What if they give it to a company that violates our national security and our national intelligence?

This is a really bad idea, folks. There is a bill that has been offered. It is a bipartisan bill in the House. I am going to sponsor it in the Senate. It is offered by two Republicans and two Democrats. The bill is very simple. It says: Do the right thing. This spectrum belongs to the American people. This C-band belongs to the American people. That \$60 billion belongs to the American people. I am asking my friends at the FCC to do the right thing. Do what you have done 100 times already, and let everybody bid. Let everybody bid. Take the \$60 billion that you get from the American people, and let's spend it on something the American people need.

I thank you for your time and attention.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S.R. 420

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, earlier this week, we celebrated Veterans Day, a day we honor the sacrifice and the service of those who fought in Normandy and Pearl Harbor and Inchon, at Khe Sanh, Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kandahar, Mosul, and everywhere else where veterans work to protect our country. We owe them and their families a debt that we often fall short in repaying. That is what this is about today.

For years, the VA has been presented with scientific information from the National Academy of Sciences making it clear that the list of the conditions stemming from Agent Orange exposure is extensive. It includes hyperthyroidism, bladder cancer, Parkinson's-like symptoms, and hypertension. In the late iteration of the Veterans and Agent Orange Exposure Update 11, published a year ago, the National Academies recognized that those illnesses—hyperthyroidism, bladder cancer, Parkinson's-like symptoms, and hypertension—all have suggestive or sufficient evidence associated with Agent Orange.

Historically, the VA added illnesses in those two categories to the list of presumptive medical conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure. On a bipartisan basis, this Congress has done the right thing time after time. We are all on the same side when it comes to helping veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

We recently found out that former VA Secretary Shulkin decided to add three of these conditions to the list of presumptive medical conditions associated with that exposure only to have OMB—the Trump administration—block his decision. In an email to Director Mulvaney, Secretary Shulkin said adding these conditions was "imperative." Yet no action took place. There are 83,000 veterans living with at least 1 of the presumptive medical conditions—83,000. They are in Tennessee. They are in Georgia. They are in South Dakota. They are in Ohio. In a discussion with blue water Navy veterans last week, I learned that since the Department put a stay on adjudicating their Agent Orange claims earlier this year, 12 veterans have died. Time is running out. Some might accuse this body of waiting until they all die. As hard as it is to say that and hear that, we are waiting until they all die before we move.

For whatever political reason the administration seems to place on this, we need to ensure that veterans receive the healthcare and the compensation they earned. They shouldn't have to fight these one at a time when there are sick men and women veterans of

Vietnam. We did this to them. The American Government decided to spray Agent Orange. We knew it was harmful. We know it is harmful. We knew it then, and we know it now. The chemical companies knew and the government knew. Why does the administration now think it is OK to abandon our commitment to these veterans? If you are exposed to poison while serving our country, there should be no question that you deserve the benefits you earned. Period. No exception.

Madam President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 420, encouraging the President to expand the list of the Department of Veterans Affairs of presumptive medical conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange to include parkinsonism, bladder cancer, hypertension, hypothyroidism, which was submitted earlier today; I further ask 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. ISAKSON. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Reserving the right to object, I want to say to my committee member how much I appreciate his dedicated work. In the committee, we work on a lot of things, including the diseases in here, getting presumptive conclusions done so we can cover as much as possible, but medicine is not exact. Diseases are not exact. Circumstances are not exact. When you make a decision to include a benefit for our veterans, you are making a commitment to spend that money from the taxpayers of the United States of America.

In the committee—and the Senator is part of it, and he knows this because I helped him a lot—we just approved blue water Navy funds, which is going to be one of the largest increases in the history of benefits going to our veterans. We are circumventing into that some of the due diligence—which you really ought to do before you make a presumption of the diseases caused in all cases.

I am an alumni of the Georgia Air National Guard and a veteran. I am chairman of the committee. I think the world of the Senator from Ohio. What he is trying to do is great and right, just as he wanted to lead us to help get us where we got to on the blue water Navy funds, but I object to this motion as one who would benefit because I have Parkinson's. I went into service during the 1960s, during a year that would be considered the Vietnam era. I didn't serve in Vietnam, but I served in that era, so I would have consideration if I got Parkinson's disease—which I have Parkinson's. Then they can use that as a conclusion to find out if it

was presumptively caused or not by the exposure I had.

I am just telling you as one who, if I wanted to, could take a benefit from this end run. I am not going to do it because I think it is time, as chairman of the committee—that it is time we make sure that every benefit we promise veterans, that we have the money to do it so we don't spend too much money on other benefits and leave ourselves short for theirs.

I object to the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Senator ISAKSON knows this is no sort of false kind of flattery. He knows how much I think of him. He runs the most bipartisan committee in the Senate. I have been honored to be on it my entire 13 years in this body. No Ohioan ever served on this committee as long as I have. I consider that a privilege, No. 1, and an opportunity to pay people back.

I didn't serve in the military. I know Senator ISAKSON did. President Trump had deferments from Vietnam. He didn't serve in the military. I think that maybe perhaps, because I didn't serve in the military, I should work a little bit harder to make sure those people, most of whom are older than I by a little bit, during the Vietnam war—that they be treated better than they were by the country and by the public upon their return from Vietnam; that they, in this case, get the benefit of the doubt and the history of what happened with Agent Orange.

You may remember years and years ago, veterans—people who had fought in Vietnam and had been exposed to Agent Orange—had to prove, initially, case by case, why they got sick, which was darn near impossible, especially when you are sick, trying to do that and go through that pain.

Congress, on a bipartisan basis, did the right thing back then. They put a list of these illnesses together that exposure to Agent Orange was likely responsible for. If you had one of these illnesses and you were boots on the ground in Vietnam, you automatically qualified. You didn't have to fight in court. You didn't have to get lawyers or do any of that. That was then.

Now, even though Secretary Shulkin—and I don't know how many Secretaries have come and gone. The President can't seem to keep Secretaries of the VA or staff of the VA because of the erratic policy he follows with veterans. The President of the United States goes to New York and makes a great speech about veterans, and we all applaud that, but then he is not willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. These are four illnesses Secretary Shulkin thought—you heard the term I used earlier, which is the term he used—he used the term about these conditions that it was “imperative” that we do something.

I understand as well as anybody how important it is to protect taxpayers. I also remember less than 2 years ago

that Congress gave a tax cut—hundreds of billions of dollars, and 70 percent of it went to the richest 1 percent of people in this country—and we can't come up with a few billion dollars to help veterans who are dying from these four illnesses? We can't expand this list and give them healthcare as we try to comfort them at the VA in Cleveland and Dayton and Cincinnati and Columbus and in Atlanta—all over? This is no end run around process. These aren't four illnesses I heard somebody talk about in Steubenville or Cleveland that ought to be covered. These are four illnesses the VA has looked at, the scientific community has looked at, the medical community has looked at, and Secretary Shulkin—who served as Secretary of the VA, appointed by President Trump, initially was acting under President Obama—we can't give them the benefit of the doubt? This is no end run. We can't give them the benefit of the doubt and say, yes, we should cover this. I hope the chairman of the Veterans' Committee—that at some point we can sit down and talk and he can reconsider.

Why do we think we need to protect President Trump, who, like me, didn't serve in the military? For me, it—I will not get into that. But why can't we help these veterans and give them the benefit of the doubt, cover these illnesses, and move forward with the VA taking care of people the way we should?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, it has now been 13 months since the administration concluded negotiations on the United States-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement. It has been 13 months of uncertainty for U.S. farmers and ranchers, manufacturers, small businesses, digital firms, financial institutions, and many others. It has been 13 months of wondering what the rules of the road on trade are going to look like going forward.

We should have passed the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement months ago. The Republicans in the Senate have been ready to take up this agreement for a long time, but trade agreements have to be considered by the House of Representatives first, and the House of Representatives is controlled by the Democratic Party, which is far more interested in partisan pursuits than in actually doing any meaningful legislating.

While the House Democrats are happy to consider far-left messaging bills that have no chance of going anywhere, they have no interest in working with the Republicans to actually get something signed into law. Why? The Democrats have convinced themselves that partisan posturing is more important than securing a bipartisan legislative victory, like a strong, new trade deal that will benefit the American economy. So they are currently opposing a trade agreement that would benefit millions of American workers.

Let's be very clear. The Democrats' decision to prioritize partisan politics is having real consequences for the American people. Right now, the members of our military are unable to fund new priorities because the Senate Democrats are blocking the consideration of Defense appropriations. Farmers and ranchers in my home State of South Dakota and around the country are struggling, but the House Democrats refuse to move forward on a trade deal—the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement—that would bring them relief.

Thanks to low commodity and livestock prices, natural disasters, and protracted trade disputes, farmers and ranchers have had a tough few years, and one of the biggest things we can do to help them is to take action on trade. Our Nation's farmers and ranchers depend on trade.

When I talk to farmers and ranchers at home in South Dakota, they emphasize that the most important thing Washington can do to boost our agricultural economy is to take action on trade agreements. Farmers and ranchers need access to new and expanded markets for their products, and, just as importantly, they need certainty about what international markets are going to look like going forward.

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement would help to meet those needs. It would preserve and expand farmers' access to two critical export markets, and it would give farmers certainty about what these markets will look like long term.

I am particularly pleased with the improvements the agreement makes for dairy producers. South Dakota has experienced a major dairy expansion over the past few years, and this agreement will benefit U.S. dairy producers by substantially expanding market access in Canada, where U.S. dairy sales have been restricted. In fact, the U.S. International Trade Commission estimates the agreement will boost U.S. dairy exports by more than \$277 million.

The agreement will expand market access for U.S. poultry and egg producers, and it will make it easier for U.S. producers to export wheat to Canada.

Of course, the benefits for the agricultural industry are just one part of this agreement. From manufacturing to digital services, to the automotive industry, virtually every sector of our economy will benefit from the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. The USMCA breaks new ground by including a chapter specifically focused on small and medium-sized businesses. It is the first time that a U.S. trade agreement has ever included a dedicated chapter on this topic. Roughly, 120,000 small and medium-sized businesses around our country export goods and services to Mexico and to Canada. The USMCA will make it easier for these businesses to successfully export their products.

It would be nice if the House Democrats woke up tomorrow and decided that 13 months was long enough to make America's farmers and ranchers and manufacturers and small business men wait for the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, but my hopes of seeing action from the House grow dimmer each day.

The Democrats in the House should be addressing the American people's priorities. American workers shouldn't be sacrificed for the Democrats' partisan political goals. I hope that enough of my Democratic colleagues in the House of Representatives will urge their House leadership to bring up the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement in the very near future. Americans have waited long enough.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I appreciate Senator THUNE's comments about the USMCA. Some might call it NAFTA 1.6. It just doesn't do very much. I was not in this body when NAFTA passed. I was down the hall in the House of Representatives. I voted against it.

I saw what NAFTA did to my State and what it did to our country in the number of lost manufacturing jobs. States in the industrial Midwest still have not recovered from that legislation, from that trade agreement—the North American Free Trade Agreement. During the Clinton administration, I opposed the President of my own party on this. In the Bush administration, the other party pushed the one for Central America. There was one after another after another of these trade agreements, and we see the lost jobs. President Trump made a huge campaign promise that he was going to do something about it, and this agreement simply doesn't do it.

We have talked to the U.S. Trade Representative repeatedly about enforcing labor standards. The whole point of fixing this agreement is so that companies will not shut down in Mansfield, in Zanesville, and in Lima, OH, and move to Mexico to build plants there and sell the products back to the United States. Yet do you know what is happening? Even the USMCA has no language in it that is going to stop the outsourcing of jobs. So, if this Congress moves on the USMCA, you can bet that month after month after month, we are going to lose manufacturing jobs, that the business plan of shutting down production in Ohio, in Rhode Island, in North or South Dakota, or in Montana will continue, and that the USMCA will not do anything about it.

This is the same President who went to Youngstown, OH, as Lordstown was about to shut down, and said: Don't sell your homes. We are going to bring those jobs back.

No, we aren't. GM moved more and more jobs to Mexico at the same time it shut down the GM plant in Lordstown, OH. There were 4,500 jobs lost. This USMCA is simply a

wallpapering over of an agreement. It doesn't do what you have to do to stop the outsourcing of jobs.

I look at trade agreements in one way. Does it mean more jobs in our country or does it mean fewer jobs? The USMCA will do nothing to stem the tide of jobs that are moving to Mexico. That is why we should go back to the table and include the Brown-Wyden amendment on labor enforcement—language that will, in fact, mean there will be more prosperity in both countries.

I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for yielding the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am not going to be that long. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to half an hour as in morning business.

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

TRIBUTE TO ADENA LEIBMAN

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, today is my 258th "Time to Wake Up" speech, and I want to use this occasion to take us back to our oceans.

Before I get into the substance of my remarks, I note that this will be the last "Time to Wake Up" speech during which Adena Leibman will be with me. She has been closely involved in all of my office's oceans work. She has, indeed, led it. She came to my office as a Knauss fellow.

We loved Dean Knauss in Rhode Island. He was the dean of the Graduate School of Oceanography at the University of Rhode Island. In working with Senator Pell, he helped to launch NOAA, helped to start the Sea Grant Program, and was extremely significant in the ocean work of our government. So one being a Knauss fellow—one of the Knauss legacies—is a really big deal and is a particularly big deal in Rhode Island.

Adena has been coordinating the oceans work now for 4 years and has also been coordinating our appropriations work. In the time that Adena has been working on this, the bipartisan Oceans Caucus, which Senator MURKOWSKI and I established, has grown to 40 Members. It is very bipartisan. It is very effective. We set it up as a working caucus, and it is working.

Adena helped us get the Coastal Resilience Fund passed into law. It is now producing tens of millions of dollars in grants for coastal communities that need the support as sea levels rise.

She helped to get the Save Our Seas Act passed. That was a unanimous effort. DAN SULLIVAN, of Alaska, was a remarkable partner in all of that. The participants in that included leaders from landlocked States. Senator INHOFE was a real leader on that bill. We had such a good time with it that we are now working on Save Our Seas 2.0, which today came through the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee after having passed the Foreign Relations Committee unanimously and the Environment and

Public Works Committee unanimously. We are hoping that soon we will be able to organize the floor consideration of it and, perhaps, pass it by unanimous consent in the way we did with the Save Our Seas Act. The work of all of that progress in those committees and the negotiating of Save Our Seas 2.0 was led by Adena.

Lastly, this week, I started going around to collect cosponsors for Senator MURKOWSKI's and my BLUE GLOBE Act, which is the ocean data monitoring bill that we have worked on and are now ready to launch. An enormous amount of preparatory work goes into getting that ready—getting supporters lined up and doing all of the work of cross-referencing the different points of view—and getting a bill that we also hope stands a good chance of passing this body by unanimous consent. So I give the speech with gratitude to Adena for her work.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President, the oceans send a clear and consistent signal about climate change, and it is a signal that has been untainted by fossil fuel industry propaganda attacks that have been problematic in other areas. The signals are untainted for good reason, because it is hard to dispute sea level rise measured with tide gauges all around the country. It is hard to dispute acidification that is measured with the kind of pH test kit that a middle school science classroom has, and it is hard to dispute rising ocean temperatures that are measured with that complex, analytical device—the thermometer. Even the fossil fuel industry has trouble fouling the climate signals from our oceans.

The recent "Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate" confirms through grim data that the health of our oceans is in rapid decline, and it confirms that these changes are caused not by nature but by man. Headlines extracted from the report are pretty alarming.

These are quotes: "The global ocean . . . has taken up more than 90 percent of the excess heat in the climate system."

" . . . the rate of ocean warming has more than doubled."

"Marine heatwaves . . . are increasing in intensity."

" . . . the ocean has undergone increasing ocean acidification."

" . . . mean sea level is rising. . . ."

"Increases in tropical cyclone winds and rainfall . . . increases in extreme waves . . . extreme sea level events and coastal hazards."

" . . . multiple climate-related hazards. . . ."

As if that is not enough, "the ocean is projected to transition to unprecedented conditions."

It is a grim warning.

Look at acidification. Ocean acidification is a chemical phenomenon. It is not deniable. You can replicate it in a middle school science lab. You can demonstrate it with your breath and a

glass of water and an aquarium bubbler and a pH strip, as I have done from this desk.

The oceans absorb around 30 percent of our excess CO₂ emissions in a chemical interaction that takes up the CO₂ but acidifies the seawater. Off our west coast, the humble pteropod is a building block in the oceanic food chain. Studies show the pteropod suffering “severe shell damage,” worsened by acidification. It is hard to make and maintain a shell in acidifying seas. Coral reefs are dying from acidification. The great ocean die-offs in geologic eras before humans existed were signaled by ocean acidification. So that is serious.

Look at heat. The oceans absorb over 90 percent of the excess atmospheric heat—not 30 percent like the CO₂—that we have trapped in our atmosphere with greenhouse gas emissions.

So think about it. All the terrestrial effects that we are already seeing from climate change come from less than one-tenth of the excess heat that we have trapped. The heat going into the oceans is sparing us humans a real catastrophe, but all that heat is changing the oceans. It is four Hiroshima-size bombs’ worth of heat energy added to our oceans every second—four Hiroshima explosions worth of heat energy per second is the rate of ocean heating. The rate of this ocean heating has already doubled, and the ocean is projected to absorb from five to seven times more heat by 2100. So it is heating at the rate at which its heating is accelerating.

What does that mean? Well, warming seas expand—that is a basic law of physics—and along with melting glaciers and ice sheets, that means seas rise: so far, about 6 inches globally; on Rhode Island shores, already nearly a foot. On our current trajectory, that is more than 3 feet globally by 2100 and more than 6 feet along our shores in Rhode Island.

This is northern Rhode Island. This is Narragansett Bay, and all of these areas that you see that are blue are land now. They are peoples’ homes. They are peoples’ businesses. There are roads and infrastructure—all projected to disappear, all projected to be swallowed by rising seas by the end of the century if we keep fiddling around here and not paying attention.

The First Street Foundation calculates that coastal communities like these along our east coast and in the Gulf of Mexico States have already lost more than \$15 billion in relative property values as the insurance and mortgage markets start to look at sea level rise and flooding, and it affects housing prices.

In Rhode Island alone, they estimate about \$45 million in relative property value lost. Predicted ahead is a coastal property values crash. That is not coming from an environmental organization. That is coming from Freddie Mac, the great American mortgage corporation.

And it is global. The New York Times recently reported new research “that some 150 million people are now living on land that will be below the high-tide line by mid-century”—150 million people.

A UK study warns global sea level rise could cost \$14 trillion annually by 2100.

This is what Freddie Mac has to say about this coastal property values crash: “The economic losses and social disruption of the coastal property values crash may happen gradually, but they are likely to be greater in total than those experienced in the housing crisis and Great Recession.” For those of us who lived through the 2008 meltdown, we don’t want to go there again. Freddie Mac is forecasting that it is going to happen because of coastal property values.

Look here to the Pacific. A new Climate Central study shows that “chronic coastal flooding or permanent inundation threatens areas occupied by more than 10 percent of the current population of nations including Bangladesh, Vietnam, and many small island developing states.”

Here is the southern part of Vietnam, swallowed up by high tide in 2050. That was the projection just a few years ago with the flooding that was going to come into the Vietnam delta area, up here, in Ho Chi Minh City, or Saigon. This is the new projection for 2050—all of it under water, including a good part of Saigon City.

As one of the authors of the report said, “most sea level rise here between now and 2050 is already baked in.” Decades more of sea level rise means the fate of many coastal communities here and around the world is already sealed, which may explain the 2013 warning by the commander of our U.S. forces in the Pacific that upheaval related to climate change “is probably the most likely thing that is going to happen . . . that will cripple the security environment.” He said:

You have the real potential here in the not-too-distant future of nations displaced by rising sea level. . . . If it goes bad, you could have hundreds of thousands or millions of people displaced and then security will start to crumble pretty quickly.

Well, here it is, as predicted by our Navy in 2013.

Thankfully, countries around the globe are awakening to the problems in our oceans. In 2015, I fought to protect a mention—a mention—of oceans in the Paris climate agreement. This year’s original host, Chile, christened the entire upcoming climate meeting a “Blue COP” with a blue vision of repairing ocean health.

I attended, as a U.S. congressional delegation of one, this year’s international Our Ocean conference in Oslo, where advocates, corporations, and governments from around the world, even the helpless Trump administration, made national and corporate and regional ocean commitments.

Norway leads a panel of 14 nations—14 heads of state and the United Na-

tions Special Envoy for the Ocean, advised by people like our own former NOAA Administrator, Jane Lubchenko. A recent panel report outlined five major ocean initiatives that could reduce 20 percent of global emissions by 2050.

The United Nations also declared the 2020s the “Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.” The world has turned toward action on oceans.

Now, usually, in confronting threats of this magnitude, the United States sets an example of leadership. We are abandoning that tradition. In conversations about climate change and ocean challenges, the United States is, at best, absent. At worst, we are the obstruction. That is a mistake. The United States should not lose its place as an international leader, not if we care about our vaunted role as the indispensable Nation and not if we care about the security and prosperity of our democracy.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Other ocean threats have prompted Congress to do what is right. We passed international fisheries treaties and the Port States Measures enforcement law. We did it unanimously here in the Senate, and now satellites are seeking out and tracking pirate fishing ships to bring them to justice.

We passed our first marine plastics legislation unanimously, and a bigger, better marine plastics bill is moving in the Senate right.

Now Senator MURKOWSKI and I are moving the biggest ocean data bill since NOAA was founded through our bipartisan Oceans Caucus.

So, yes, we can do better, and we must.

Henry Kissinger once told me that the great revolutions of the world have come about from what he called a confluence of resentments. Well, the poorest—those who depend most closely on the oceans, those who lead subsistence lives—will suffer most the brunt of the coming crisis, and they will resent it.

Look at fisheries. The poorest starve when their fisheries collapse. Others are distressed when fisheries collapse but have the resources to migrate or find alternative food sources. For wealthy nations, like ours, the fish in our air-conditioned supermarkets may cost a bit more, but our lives aren’t seriously affected. But when the poor and distressed are hurt like that, they will resent it. That is human nature, and if you turn the pain up high enough, well, good luck defending to them the systems of parliamentary democracy and market capitalism that countenanced their suffering.

Years ago, Daniel Webster described the work of our Founders as having set the world an example. He went on to say that “the last hopes of mankind, therefore, rest with us.” From Jonathan Winthrop to Ronald Reagan, we have called America “a city on a hill,” set high for the world to witness. President Clinton argued that “people . . . have always been more impressed by

the power of our example than the example of our power.’

We still tout our system of democracy and capitalism as a beacon of success and progress, but we have aided and abetted the failure of our system to address the climate and oceans crisis. Worst of all is the reason for it—the fossil fuel industry’s menacing climate denial apparatus. That apparatus may have won the day influencing Congress for now, but it will surely fail the test of time. History will judge harshly an American generation that let its democracy be corrupted by this industry.

The voice of the oceans is more lasting than the greed and folly of man, and it warns of consequences driven by laws of chemistry, physics, and biology. These stern natural laws cannot be repealed or vetoed. Propaganda can manipulate people, passions, and politics, but propaganda cannot change the immutable laws of nature. The data are the voice of the oceans, and if data could scream, the oceans would now be screaming.

So to paraphrase a poem, let us be the “voice the sea would have if it had not a better one: as it lifts . . . its rumbling, deep-structured roar.” Let us wake up and get to our duty.

“Slap Nature,” Pope Francis said, “and she will slap you back.” We have a hell of a slap coming if we don’t get ahead of this, and we better wake up to it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

NOMINATION OF STEVEN J. MENASHI

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I have come here before to call out Senate Republicans and their unwavering support for President Trump’s efforts to pack our courts with partisan and ideologically driven picks, but the nominee I am speaking against today is truly uniquely unfit to serve a lifetime appointment—a lifetime appointment—on a Federal court: Steven Menashi.

Mr. Menashi has a deeply disturbing history of disparaging comments against women, communities of color, immigrants, and the LGBTQI community.

He unabashedly helped to roll back protections for vulnerable communities. He defiantly refused to answer basic questions from U.S. Senators, both Democrats and Republicans, about the policies he worked on while advising the President. He has time and again put extremism and ideology ahead of the rule of law, and he has proven himself incapable of serving as a fair and impartial judge.

As if his record of extremism and partisanship wasn’t bad enough, we now know that Steven Menashi not only helped but was the key architect in Secretary DeVos’s efforts to illegally deny relief to student borrowers who were cheated by predatory for-profit colleges. These policies that Mr. Menashi provided “legal advice” for were subsequently ruled to be in violation of Federal law.

Secretary DeVos’s policy on borrower defense led to her being held in contempt of court. Whether Mr. Menashi did not understand Federal law or whether he advised the Secretary of Education to blatantly ignore it at the expense of students, the fact is that this latest revelation undoubtedly and unequivocally disqualifies him from serving a lifetime appointment on a Federal court—or, at least, it should.

Tomorrow, the Senate will take a critical vote. This is a vote on whether the Senate once again rubberstamps President Trump’s unprecedented effort to remake the Federal judiciary on a partisan ideological basis. It is a vote that shows whether Republicans are willing to support a judicial nominee whose actions—his own actions—have been found to violate the law as recently as just a few weeks ago.

I implore my Republican colleagues to consider not just Mr. Menashi’s record of bigotry and the harm he helped cause to cheated and defrauded students, but also his blatant disregard of the rule of law.

When casting their vote, I ask my colleagues not to worry about what the President might say on Twitter, but to worry about the rule of law and to worry about the idea yet another partisan nominee getting a lifetime on the Federal bench who doesn’t. It is that simple.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

SURVIVORS’ BILL OF RIGHTS IN THE STATES ACT
OF 2019

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join Mr. GRASSLEY from Iowa on the floor today to talk about important legislation that we are cosponsoring that built upon previous efforts that both of us were engaged in to protect survivors of sexual assault in the criminal justice system. The efforts to extend rights to sexual assault survivors across the country is critically important, and I am hopeful that, once our legislation is known to our colleagues, that they will join us in passing this important bipartisan bill.

Amanda Nguyen of the Rise organization initially contacted our office in 2015. I know she also worked with Senator GRASSLEY. When she came to us and detailed her harrowing story of sexual assault, she was raped, and then she felt like she was raped again by a criminal justice system that was not responsive to the challenges of survivors of sexual assault. Amanda described the system that further traumatized survivors and provided scarce protections for their rights.

Evidence of assault was being destroyed without survivors’ consent, and survivors were forced to periodically follow up with law enforcement to preserve that evidence. The broken process that survivors were forced to endure resulted in a system where they were often re-victimized. Instead of a process that helped them move forward

with their lives as they pursued justice, survivors were confronted with the trauma of reliving their attack each time they sought to preserve evidence or gather information about their case.

Well, because of Amanda’s efforts, the Sexual Assault Survivors’ Rights Act was created. It was legislation that provided for the first legally recognized set of rights for survivors that could be enforced in a court of law. Senator GRASSLEY took that legislation, he included it in the Adam Walsh Reauthorization Act, and it was signed into law. It has provided survivors with greater protections in Federal cases because of focus on notice, on access to evidence, and on the preservation of sexual assault evidence collection kits.

By creating this set of court enforceable rights at the Federal level, Congress established a model for the States to adopt similar legislation to protect the rights of survivors. So far, 21 States, including my home State of New Hampshire, have adopted that legislation to guarantee survivors certain basic rights in the criminal justice system.

Now, unfortunately, we are trying to figure out how to encourage other States to follow the lead of Congress, States that have not yet adopted legislation protecting survivors. That is why the bill that Senator GRASSLEY and I are here to discuss today is so critically important. The Survivors’ Bill of Rights in the States Act, the legislation we are cosponsoring, would establish a grant program accessible to States that have in place a law which guarantees the rights contained in the Sexual Assault Survivors’ Rights Act.

The grand amount would be a percentage of the funding that the State receives under the Stop Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program. States could then use the funds to implement survivor rights, preserve sexual assault evidence collection kits, reduce the backlog of kits, and provide support for victim services.

Congress has previously passed legislation using the Stop Formula Grants to incentivize States to adopt legislation, and this is the perfect example of why that kind of an approach would be successful. No survivor should be compelled to bear the indignity of petitioning law enforcement merely to ensure that they are given a fair shake in the criminal justice process. It is my hope that this legislation will lead to an increase in States passing bills to protect survivors’ rights.

I think it is important that Congress again show survivors that we are behind them, that we will stand up with them for their rights. The Survivors’ Bill of Rights in the States Act would do just that.

I am so pleased to be joining Senator GRASSLEY in this effort. I think, with this bipartisan support, we can get support from all of our colleagues to enact this follow-on legislation into law and provide the additional support that survivors need.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield to my colleague, Senator GRASSLEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, first of all, it is a pleasure to work with Senator SHAHEEN on this bill. I am very happy to work together. We have the same goals in mind. For the cynical people outside of Washington, DC, that say there is never any Republican or Democratic cooperation, there is kind of a rule around here that Senator SHAHEEN and I are examples of, but it applies to all 100 Senators.

If you really want to get something done, you have to seek bipartisanship in this body. I can quantify that in this way. There are 53 Republicans. There are 47 Democrats. But if there were 53 Democrats and 47 Republicans, the same rule would apply.

About 99 percent of the legislation that gets done around here has to have 60 votes to stop debate before you can even vote on the bill. So obviously, even if all 53 Republicans were voting together—and that doesn't happen very often—you still wouldn't get the 60 votes to pass a piece of legislation. So that is why almost every major piece of legislation that gets through here—and this example of Shaheen-Grassley is just another example—it is because you seek bipartisanship, and it is just nice that it has to be that way.

So addressing this issue, I can say I associate myself with the remarks of Senator SHAHEEN and sit down, but there is kind of a rule around the Senate. Everything that has been said on this bill has been said, but I haven't said it yet, and I am going to say it.

I recently introduced S. 2770, known as the Survivors' Bill of Rights in the States Act of 2019, with Senator SHAHEEN and Senator TILLIS. This measure is a companion to what Congresswoman SPEIER developed and introduced in the other Chamber. It builds on legislation entitled the Survivors' Bill of Rights Act that we adopted in 2016.

As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee in the last Congress, I worked closely with a young woman, Amanda Nguyen, on the development of that 2016 measure prior to its introduction. Amanda, a survivor of sexual assault, found and leads the nonprofit organization known as Rise, R-I-S-E.

She also worked with Senator SHAHEEN on the same legislation, introducing the final version in this Chamber. We incorporated that 2016 package of rights into an amendment that I offered to another measure before the Senate Judiciary Committee. In May 2016, that legislation passed this Chamber 89 to 0. In October 2016, the House version, which was introduced later, was signed by the President.

The bills that we introduced this month on the 2016 Survivors' Bill of Rights, it makes each State eligible to receive a Federal grant to implement a similar package of rights for victims of

sex crimes at the State level. Such rights include, for example, the right to know the results of your forensic exam, the right to have evidence preserved for a certain period, and the right to notice before your forensic kit is destroyed.

A State also may use its Justice Department grants to preserve sexual assault evidence kits, reduce the number of kits awaiting testing, and extend additional assistance to crime victims under our legislation. Finally, the measure we introduced authorizes 20 million annually for each of the fiscal years 2021 through 2024 to support the implementation of the new grant program established by this bill. I urge my colleagues to join us in cosponsoring the Survivors' Bill of Rights in the States Act of 2019.

I thank Senator SHAHEEN for joining in this effort and leading this bill and, most importantly, to compliment her over a long period of time in the Senate—and probably even before she came to the Senate—her commitment to working with me and with people generally on the issue of increased protection for victims of sexual assault.

Again, I thank Congresswoman SPEIER and her staff for initiating this measure in the House and for working so hard to develop a bicameral, bipartisan measure, and I thank Senator SHAHEEN once again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

SAFESPORT ACT OF 2019

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, this week I introduced S. 2838 with Senators ERNST, BLACKBURN, SULLIVAN, MURKOWSKI, and PERDUE. This legislation, which we have titled the SAFESPORT Act of 2019, includes funding accountability, antiretaliation protection, child abuse reporting, and other reform measures.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Commerce Committee members who lead the Senate subcommittee with jurisdiction over the Ted Stevens Act, along with Commerce Committee Chairman WICKER, for including so much of my SAFESPORT Act as an amendment to a larger package that they developed. That measure is S. 2330, the Empowering Olympic and Amateur Athletes Act of 2019, sponsored by Senators MORAN and BLUMENTHAL.

Senators MORAN and BLUMENTHAL worked closely with me to secure the inclusion of multiple provisions of my SAFESPORT Act in their bill, which cleared the Commerce Committee this morning with unanimous bipartisan support. Every one of these provisions is designed to ensure that the U.S. Center for SafeSport, which is tasked by Congress with investigating abuse of athletes in amateur sports, continues on its current track of excellence. I extend my sincere appreciation to both subcommittee leaders for their hard work on S. 2330 and for collaborating with me to improve their bipartisan bill.

First, the SAFESPORT Act would enhance child abuse reporting, by ensuring that the Center for SafeSport is subject to the same mandatory reporting requirements as other professionals who work with children, under the Federal Victims of Child Abuse Act. By law, this center is tasked with receiving and investigating complaints of sexual abuse in amateur sports, which is why its personnel should have to report suspected crimes against children to the authorities.

Second, this bill ensures that the Center for SafeSport, a private organization that already receives millions annually in revenue from the Olympic community—and which would receive \$20 million annually, at the direction of Congress, if the Moran-Bhimenthal bill is enacted—is subject to an annual audit by an independent auditor. Such an audit is highly recommended by charity watchdog groups for the highest functioning nonprofit organizations. It is also a standard requirement for almost any nonprofit charitable organization receiving Federal grant awards of more than \$750,000 annually. My legislation also calls for the Center for SafeSport to implement any corrective actions recommended by the auditor each year or explain why it disagrees with the recommendations.

Third, this legislation subjects the Center for SafeSport to certain transparency requirements, ensuring, for example, that this organization reports to Congress annually with a detailed account of its activities, any changes in its financial standing, and a corrective action plan to implement auditor recommendations, if any. We are entitled to know how many complaints the organization investigates and resolves using the millions of dollars it receives from the U.S. Olympic community each year. Such information would be made available to the public, under the SAFESPORT Act.

The Commerce Committee included all of these accountability, transparency, and child abuse reporting provisions, as well as the antiretaliation language of my SAFESPORT Act in the package it approved today. That antiretaliation language, on which I collaborated with Senator PETERS, protects whistleblowers who come forward and report abuses in amateur sports. I thank Senator PETERS for his collaboration on that language. I am delighted