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Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Majestic God, Your name fills the Earth. In spite of our challenges, You continue to rule with Your love, wisdom, and power. Grant that our lawmakers may not forget the many dangers, toils, and snares You have already brought our Nation through.

Lord, give our Senators the wisdom to know that You continue to direct the steps of the faithful and that we have nothing to fear. Spirit of God, arise within our hearts and prepare us for the task of this day. Surprise us again with Your ability to transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows, doing for us more than we can ask or imagine.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to address my colleagues for 1½ minutes as in morning business.

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

WORLD BANK

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I believe I have developed a reputation among my colleagues, and hopefully among my constituents, for transparency in the issue of the public's

business should be public. That applies to how the World Bank loans U.S. dollars. The World Bank is right now trying to sneak through a new policy that offends me.

I received word that the World Bank is planning to vote right now, as I speak, on a new country partnership framework with China. That framework commits the World Bank to providing China with billions of dollars in loans indefinitely. What is odd about this is that China is now the world's second largest economy and its per capita income is well above the levels at which countries are supposed to graduate from needing World Bank assistance. In other words, China should stand on their own two feet without help from the American taxpayers or even indirectly through the World Bank.

It happens that our country is the World Bank's largest contributor, and the spending bill that funds the World Bank includes a provision for a big capital increase from the American taxpayers to the World Bank. With this legislation pending, we in the Congress have an opportunity to weigh in and we should take that opportunity to make sure that American taxpayer dollars don't go to China, particularly when China is taking their own money and investing in the Belt and Road Initiative to get influence around several countries on the face of the Earth.

I will have more to say later on this topic.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, for weeks now, the Republicans have been asking the Democrats to take off their impeachment blinders and let Congress legislate for the American people. We have argued that American families deserve better than this partisan paralysis, where the Democrats literally obsess over impeachment and obstruct everything else.

This very morning, for example, the Speaker gave a speech on national television to push forward her rushed and partisan impeachment, with not one word on the outstanding legislation the American people actually need—nothing on the USMCA or the NDAA or funding for our Armed Forces. It is all impeachment, all the time. Only in this town, only in Washington, does anybody think it is OK for our Armed Forces to go unfunded and for a major trade deal to go unpassed, because the Democrats are too busy hosting a panel of law professors to criticize President Trump on television instead of being busy on the things the American people actually need us to address.

The Kentuckians I represent cannot believe our military commanders are being denied certainty, our men and women in uniform are being denied stable funding, and 176,000 new American jobs are being held up all because the Democratic leadership thinks there is more political advantage in obstruction than in doing their jobs. Well, the servicemembers and personnel in the Kentucky National Guard and at Fort Campbell, Fort Knox, and the Blue Grass Army Depot aren't going to simply stop doing their jobs. No, they are counting on us to pass critical defense legislation that reforms housing and spousal employment programs, that invests in construction, readiness, and

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



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modernization, and that locks in—listen to this—the largest pay raise in a decade.

These bills touch every single State. Of course, there are major national and international issues at stake, as well, but the Democrats are still holding the NDAA hostage for a partisan wish list that is meant to appease trial lawyers, public sector unions, and their own far-left base. They are holding up the NDAA over unrelated, nongermane, leftwing wish-list items.

Meanwhile, the Speaker and the Democratic leader are withholding their assent from important bipartisan provisions like the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, which has previously passed both Houses and has been modified to resolve all concerns by the committees of jurisdiction. Unlike the Democratic leader's rhetoric on Syria in recent weeks, this bill would actually do something to stand up for the Syrian people and hold Assad accountable. So I hope the Democratic leader will allow this important demonstration of our support for the Syrian people to go forward.

In the meantime, as if to underscore that the Democrats' top priority is performance art for coastal elites and not the people's business, I understand the Speaker of the House spent part of this week in Madrid, talking about climate change. She took an international flight to discuss carbon emissions. So the Speaker was in Spain, lamenting President Trump's decision to pull us out of the Paris Agreement. Maybe she pitched her conference's Green New Deal—its socialist plan to hurt our economy for American families—while bigger emitters like China go roaring right by.

As an aside, over the past 15 years, the United States' carbon emissions have actually fallen significantly. We appear to be on track for another decline in 2019. Meanwhile, Paris Agreement signatories, like China and India, continue to emit more and more every year. China already emits, roughly, twice as much as the United States, and it is increasing every year.

Kentucky and many other States know exactly what happens when Washington Democrats ignore these facts and decide America needs to take on unilateral economic pain for no meaningful change in global emissions. We are still trying to recover from the Democrats' last "War on Coal." We certainly don't need the Speaker of the House to promise the Europeans that she is going to start a new one. So working Americans and their families are not well served by the Democrats' political performance art. What they really need are results.

The only path to results is bipartisan legislation, and, fortunately, it is a well-trodden one. There are 58 consecutive annual defense authorizations to prove it. Always in the past we have been able to overcome these partisan differences and go forward. There is a bipartisan-bicameral agreement that

the Speaker and the Democratic leader signed just a few months ago to help them find their way back to the table, but the agreement needs to be honored. I hope they do so sometime soon.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, while we wait for our Democratic colleagues to let this legislation move forward, the Senate has used the time to confirm more of President Trump's impressive nominees for the Federal courts.

Some of my friends across the aisle complain that we devote too much time to nominations. First, I would like to remind everyone that district judges are the kinds of nominations that, historically, have sailed right through the Senate in big groups by voice votes. If our Democratic colleagues want to spend less time voting on district judges, they should take it up with the Democratic leader, who is forcing us to take cloture vote after cloture vote. As of this morning, we have taken cloture votes on 81 district judge nominees.

By this point in President Obama's Presidency, we had taken one cloture vote on a district judge nominee. Let me say that again. As of this morning, we have taken cloture votes on 81 district judges. By this point in President Obama's Presidency, we had taken one cloture vote on a district judge nominee—just one.

At the comparable point in the five Presidencies preceding President Obama's, combined, we had not taken a single cloture vote on a district judge's nomination—not one. Yet, 3 years into the Trump Presidency, there have been 81 cloture votes and counting just on district judges. So there is your answer on floor time.

More broadly, I want to take a moment to help clarify why I and millions of other Americans care so much about having Federal judges who believe in the radical notion that words matter and that a judge's job is to follow the law and the Constitution.

Take, for example, the subject of religious freedom. The liberty of conscience and the freedom to live out our faiths has been a foundational principle from the Republic's earliest days. Many of the first Europeans who arrived in the New World came here after having fled religious persecution.

James Madison wrote that religion "must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate."

Samuel Adams said in the summer of 1776 that America would be the "last asylum" for "freedom of thought and the right of private judgment."

Let me contrast the Founders' understanding with a couple of current events. Last month, New York State convinced a district judge to throw out the Trump administration's conscience protection rule for healthcare pro-

viders. This straightforward rule ensured that healthcare workers could not be forced to perform or assist with medical procedures that profoundly violated their religious beliefs. Yet the radical Democrats in New York could not abide by this basic protection for people of faith. Instead, they wanted to force Christians and other people of faith who work in healthcare to either assist in procedures like abortion or lose their jobs—so much for freedom of conscience.

New York's behavior is part of a disturbing trend. Powerful interests on the left want to shrink freedom of religion until it means freedom to go to church for an hour on Sundays as long as it doesn't impact the rest of your life. That shrunken interpretation is nothing like what our Founders intended, and, candidly, I am not sure how much longer the modern Democratic Party will even believe in that.

A few months ago, a Democrat who is running for President told CNN that the government should take away the tax-exempt status of churches and religious institutions that disagree with leftwing positions. He was not some fringe candidate. He was a guy whom the Democrats and the mainstream media had likened to John F. Kennedy. He was openly suggesting the Federal Government should punish churches if liberals don't like their social views—how appalling.

These disturbing signs have not been limited to the courts or to the Democratic campaign trail. Absurd anti-religious arguments have appeared right here in the Senate. In the last several years, some of our Democratic colleagues have tried, literally, to impose religious tests on nominees for Federal office. Just take the "no religious test" clause and the First Amendment and throw them right out the window. Get rid of them.

Judge Brian Buescher, now a district judge in Nebraska, was attacked by two Democrats on the Committee on the Judiciary for being a faithful Catholic and a member of the mainstream, worldwide Catholic group the Knights of Columbus. He was attacked for being a member of the Knights of Columbus? In written questions, one Senator called standard Catholic teachings "extreme positions" and asked if he would dial down his personal faith practice if confirmed. That happened in the Committee on the Judiciary of this Senate.

As our colleague Senator SASSE observed at the time, the Democrats were transparently implying that Brian's religious beliefs and his affiliation with his Catholic, religious, fraternal organization might make him unfit for service. It was plainly unconstitutional.

Judge Amy Coney Barrett, now a circuit judge on the Seventh Circuit, was likewise subjected to a religious test during her confirmation hearing. One Democratic Senator literally asked: Do you consider yourself an orthodox

Catholic? She was asked that in the Committee on the Judiciary.

Another offered this bizarre and ominous remark: "The dogma lives loudly within you, and that's a concern."

So, look, these warning signs on religious freedom are literally popping up everywhere the modern political left rears its head.

Religious freedom in America has never—never—meant and will never mean solely the freedom to worship privately. It has never meant and will never mean the ability to practice only a subset of faiths acceptable to some subset of politicians. What it means is the right to live your life according to the dictates of your faith and your conscience, free from government coercion.

If those statements strike anybody in this Chamber as remotely controversial, that is exactly why President Trump, Senate Republicans, and millions of Americans are focused on confirming Federal judges who will apply our Constitution as it was originally written.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Richard Ernest Myers II, of North Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

FOSTERING UNDERGRADUATE TALENT BY UNLOCKING RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION ACT

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam President, first, I thank the Democratic leader for the opportunity to move forward on this unanimous consent.

As in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 212, H.R. 2486.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2486) to reauthorize mandatory funding programs for historically Black col-

leges and universities and other minority-serving institutions.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Alexander-Murray amendment at the desk be agreed to and that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 1255), in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute.)

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam President, I know of no further debate on the bill, as amended.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Hearing none, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill, as amended, pass?

The bill (H.R. 2486), as amended, was passed.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senators from South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington State, and Alabama be allowed to speak for brief moments on the great job they have done and that I be given back my leadership time at 10:50.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, on behalf of all of us, I want to thank the Democratic leader for his courtesy and his support on this. He and Senator MCCONNELL have made it possible for us to do this.

I am going to limit my remarks to a couple of minutes, and then Senator MURRAY and then Senator SCOTT, Senator COONS, Senator JONES are here, and we will finish by 10:50.

Madam President, it is hard to think of a piece of legislation that would have a more lasting impact upon minority students in America than the bill that the Senate just passed.

I believe, in doing so, we have improved the provision in the House bill that was sent to us. That is what we did; we amended a House bill that we are now sending back to them. We have been working with leaders in the House to make sure that our bill is something

the House can accept and pass. We hope that will happen in the next couple of weeks, and here is the result of it happening: No. 1, a big step for historically Black colleges and minority institutions—permanent funding at the level of \$255 million a year for those institutions that serve up to 2 million minority students. That is No. 1.

The second big step is one that Senator MURRAY and I and our committee, Senator JONES, Senator BENNET, Senator KING, and many others have been working on for 5 years to simplify the form that students use to apply for Federal aid for college. Twenty million families fill out what is called the FAFSA, a Federal aid form, every year; then we have students who borrow more than \$100 billion a year. What we have done in this bill is reduce the complexity of filing that FAFSA form by saying to students: You don't have to give your Federal tax information to the government twice. We will take the up to 22 questions that are a part of the 108-question FAFSA, and we will eliminate them, and if the student gives his or her express consent, the Internal Revenue Service will answer those questions for the student.

I can't tell you how many times students, parents, college presidents, Federal aid counselors have told me that the application and the verification of this information has discouraged low-income students from coming to college.

Five and one-half million of the twenty million students who fill out these forms have the accuracy of those forms questioned. This will eliminate that for most of the students because they will have to give that information to the government only once.

I want to thank Senator MURRAY especially for her work on this. We work together on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee in the Senate, but Senator COONS, Senator SCOTT, Senator RICHARD BURR of North Carolina—which has the largest number of historically Black colleges—and Senator JONES of Alabama have also been crucial with their support.

I yield the floor to Senator MURRAY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, HBCUs, Tribal colleges, and other minority-serving institutions—or MSIs—are an essential part of our entire higher education system, and those institutions serve nearly 6 million undergraduate students, a large majority of whom are students of color or Native students.

Funding for those critical institutions should never be up for debate, and now, because of this, it will not be. I am so glad we have reached a bipartisan deal that will permanently fund HBCUs and MSIs.

I know many of our colleagues worked very hard on this, but I especially want to thank Senator JONES for his leadership in pushing to make sure this got done, as well as my partner

Senator ALEXANDER, and, of course, Senators COONS, SCOTT, and BURR.

I am also pleased that this legislation streamlines Federal student aid for more than 20 million students applying for aid and nearly 8 million borrowers.

Our Nation's outdated and overly complicated financial aid system is forcing students and borrowers to jump through too many hoops to access Federal financial aid and verify their tax returns, which they have already filled out, and to get help if they are struggling to pay their student loans.

The FAFSA Act, which has been included in this bill, allows data to be securely shared between the IRS and the Department of Education, making it easier for students to fill out the FAFSA and pay their loans.

This bill will strengthen privacy protections and how students and borrowers navigate their financial aid through a streamlined, more efficient process.

This bill is also thanks to Jeff Appel, an integral member of Federal Student Aid who recently passed away. I am grateful for his contribution, and I know that he will be sorely missed.

There is one more way in which this agreement we have reached is important. This proves once again that we can work across the aisle and get things done when we all stay focused squarely on what is best for students.

We have a lot of work ahead of us to make higher education in our country more affordable and accessible and to hold schools accountable for student outcomes and ensure student safety on campus. I am hopeful that we can build on this bipartisan progress we have seen so far as we continue working together to reauthorize the Higher Education Act in a comprehensive way.

Again, I want to thank all of my colleagues for their work on this, and I look forward to more to come.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina. Madam President, to avoid the risk of being redundant, I want to put a little skin on the bones as relates to what this act really means to college students, particularly those college students entering into the process for the very first time and their families.

What it means is simply this: Simplification means more education for a lot more students, and that is good news. We oftentimes talk about the importance of keeping the American dream alive and keeping it well. This will provide significant opportunities for low-income students to get through the process very quickly.

In South Carolina we have eight HBCUs. The economic impact of those graduates is around \$5 billion of lifetime earnings. This bill makes that more achievable, more attainable, and keeps the American Dream alive and well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. JONES. Madam President, I am rising today with just, for lack of a better term, an incredible amount of hope and excitement—something we don't always see on the Senate floor these days. We go through so many routine measures. We go through so many political speeches. But today is truly a day of hope and excitement and optimism because we are on the verge of a significant moment for our Nation's historically Black colleges and universities and all minority-serving institutions. I frankly hope that in our partisan world we are living in and in our partisan America, people across this country are tuning in right now or at least will follow what is happening on the floor of the Senate today, where a bipartisan coalition has come together for a significant and important segment of our population that deserves the same economic and educational opportunities as everyone else.

Fourteen months ago, I came to this Chamber to introduce a permanent extension, an increase of funding for these important institutions of education. Nearly half of all the funding they receive was set to run out on September 30, 2019. We secured a quarter of the Senate as cosponsors of the bill, and we laid out an ambitious proposal.

In the new Congress, with the clock ticking down toward the deadline, we offered a more modest but bipartisan and paid-for plan to avert the looming fiscal cliff. But our goal and the goal of everyone here and the goal of all of those, including my friend Senator ALEXANDER, was to always reach the ultimate goal of permanent funding, a permanent solution for these important institutions.

All told, these schools serve 6 million students across the country. They are often the foundation upon which families begin to build generational wealth—not just one person who goes to college but generational wealth in communities that have long faced systematic barriers to doing so. They create good, sustainable jobs. They are part of the very foundation of our higher education system in this country and in my State in particular.

With all the due respect to my friend Senator MURRAY from Washington, there is a little controversy about who has the most HBCUs. I would claim that Alabama does with 14, but that is for debate on another day. But we can all agree that supporting these schools and the students they serve is not a partisan issue. I think we can all agree on that. I think we have shown that we can agree that funding should never become a political football. We have all been working toward the same goal.

To say the least, I am so deeply relieved that today we forged this bipartisan compromise that will allow these schools the funding and the certainty they need to go forward and continue fulfilling their important mission.

I sincerely especially want to thank my colleagues on the HELP Committee

and Chairman ALEXANDER and Ranking Member MURRAY in particular for their leadership and willingness to reach across the aisle and find the common ground for the better good of this community. I also want to thank my friend Senator SCOTT from South Carolina for joining me on what we have done over the last couple of years to introduce the FUTURE Act and to push it forward.

I believe—and I have said this for so long—that we have so much more in common than we have that divides us. This is just one example. It is why I hope folks across the country are looking and see that we can come together and we can be unified.

I am grateful today because in addition to the permanent funding of HBCUs and minority-serving institutions, this agreement, as the Senator from Tennessee said, includes a long overdue, first big step toward simplifying the FAFSA application.

Even with a law degree, I can tell you that with my kids, trying to do that made me pull out what little bit of hair I have left. I didn't need to do that. It is not just a frustrating process; it can be so intimidating that students or their parents just walk away. In Alabama alone, kids walked away from millions of dollars of Federal financial aid and grants, not just loans. The FAFSA as it is today can be a huge barrier for students who want to go to college.

The proposal we have on the table now will help save taxpayers and make the FAFSA process less painful by cutting up to 22 questions from the form. It lays the groundwork for a broader FAFSA reform that Senator ALEXANDER and I have been working on to cut even further to between 17 to 30 questions.

But getting across the finish line today is not just about renewing funding or cutting redtape. At their core, these issues are about opening doors of opportunity for young people who have talent and motivation to succeed in college and in life, but they have not necessarily had the financial means or the family connections to do so. This is about making sure we empower every young person in this country to reach their full potential and then pay it forward for future generations. That is what gives me hope standing here today. It is what makes me excited today.

Again, I want to thank my colleagues for the incredible effort—Senators ALEXANDER and MURRAY in particular. Our hearts have always been in the right place. We have always moved the ball forward knowing that the long-term goal was to help these families for generations to come.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Madam President, today is about a moment of hope. Today is about a moment of genuine bipartisanship made possible by the discipline

and determined leadership of Senators ALEXANDER of Tennessee and MURRAY of Washington State.

I rise to join my friend and colleague, the Senator from Alabama, who has just given remarks following the Senator from South Carolina. At a moment when what most Americans see on their televisions is partisan division and dysfunction in the Senate and the House, I just want to remind all of us that we can get good, important, and significant things done together, as just happened on the floor a few moments ago.

For generations, American families have worked and saved and strived to send their children to college, but for a long time, our Nation's original sin—the sin of slavery and racism—has left a long shadow and a stain on access to the critical opportunity of higher education. In much of our Nation, for decades, African Americans were denied entry to most of our colleges and universities and still today face unreasonably high barriers to higher education. The establishment of historically Black colleges and universities, HBCUs, and other minority-serving institutions of higher learning has been a critical answer to that tragic history of discrimination.

Men and women who founded HBCUs refused to accept a system of higher education that denied opportunity to African Americans, and over decades, HBCUs have risen to become some of our Nation's finest academic institutions. They have educated hundreds of thousands of young men and women who have gone on to do incredible things and to be some of our Nation's greatest leaders.

That is why all of us who have come on the floor today, Republicans and Democrats, have acted to make a permanent commitment to supporting HBCUs and minority-serving institutions with Federal funding. We have agreed to make permanent \$255 million in annual funding for HBCUs.

I am particularly excited about this legislation because my home State of Delaware is home to one of the finest public HBCUs in the country, Delaware State University. Founded in 1891, it is one of the country's premier land grant universities. Over the last 125 years, it has emerged as one of our Nation's premier HBCUs, graduating some of my State's best accountants, business leaders, researchers, scientists, teachers, social workers, and much more.

My friend Dr. Wilma Mishoe, the University's first female president, will end her impressive tenure this month and be succeeded by Provost Dr. Tony Allen, who will continue the upwardly rising trajectory of the Hornets of Delaware State University.

Their research programs are important drivers for innovation in a State with a long history of invention. It is home to the Delaware Center for Neuroscience Research, a partnership of institutions working to advance our understanding of our brains and how we

form thoughts, memories, and feelings that may help unlock the key to addiction and other challenges our country faces. It is also home to OSCAR, the Optical Science Center for Applied Research, which is helping speed the detection of disease, supporting our soldiers in detecting threats, and even equipping the NASA Mars rovers with improved sensors. Delaware State has been the lead institution on grants from NASA, NSF, and NIH in just the last few years.

We are very proud of Delaware State. The funding stream last year provided \$380,000 in critically needed funding for STEM, faculty, research, and students.

Let me last reference something that my colleagues have also spoken to: the streamlining of the free application for Federal student aid, or FAFSA, which impacts 20 million American families.

I spent a long time—roughly 20 years of my life—actively involved in the national “I Have a Dream” Foundation, which provides college-access opportunities for young people from families with no means or experience of attending higher education. I myself sat with dozens of young Delawareans and struggled as we finished the FAFSA form for them. This long-worked-for solution that Senators Alexander and Murray have advanced streamlining this form from 108 questions to 22 is a critical first step that will make a lasting difference for access to education all over our Nation.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to join this bipartisan coalition and look forward to even more progress in the months and years ahead.

Thank you.

With that, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, let me thank my colleagues from South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington State, Alabama, and Delaware for their hard work on this very important issue. I appreciated their words, and I think far more appreciated even than their eloquent words is the fact that we are getting this done, finally. I am so glad for it.

Let me just add my words of support for the FUTURE Act. A few minutes ago, as I mentioned, we passed the FUTURE Act by unanimous consent. I am so glad and grateful that the Senate came together today to give these institutions and the students they serve the certainty needed to continue focusing on their important mission.

In America, we believe in ladders up. People should have to climb those ladders. No one is going to put them up on a pedestal. But there should be the ladders there so that if somebody wants to work hard, they are given fair opportunity and barriers—sometimes barriers based on bigotry and discrimination—do not stand in their way.

One of the best ladders-up we have in America is our HBCUs. HBCUs make up 3 percent of colleges and univer-

sities, but they produce 27 percent of African-American students with bachelor degrees in STEM fields, 80 percent of African-American judges, 40 percent of African-American engineers, 50 percent of African-American lawyers, and 40 percent of African-American colleagues here in the Congress are HBCU graduates. So this is one fine ladder-up, as are our other institutions that spend much time helping Hispanic Americans and Native Americans as well.

We need these ladders. They are part of America. We should help them whenever we can. Tribal colleges and universities serving Black, Hispanic, and Native American populations serve more than 130,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives, the most underserved group in higher education. Hispanic-serving institutions have grown by nearly 40 percent since 2009, helping the Latino community make big inroads in college enrollment and completion. They now enroll 66 percent of all Hispanic undergraduates but account for only 15 percent of nonprofit colleges.

So all three of these types of institutions—the HBCUs, the colleges and universities serving American Indians and Alaska Natives, and Hispanic-serving institutions—are amazing ladders up. They are essential for making higher education accessible, affordable, and attainable for all Americans; essential for having that bright Sun—the American dream—actually shine on people instead of it being some words that are meaningless to them.

This is a very fine moment, and I want to thank all of those who put this all together and made it happen. We can celebrate. Most of the things that pass by UC around here—or many of them—are really kind of small and narrow. This is not. This is very important. And my salute to those who made it happen, whom I mentioned earlier.

IMPEACHMENT

Madam President, now on a less happy subject, this morning the Speaker of the House instructed House committee chairs to begin drafting articles of impeachment against the President of the United States. That is a very solemn duty and solemn undertaking. The Speaker's decision comes after the House Intelligence Committee reported that its inquiry had “uncovered a months-long effort by President Trump to use the powers of his office to solicit foreign interference on his behalf in the 2020 election.”

We know Russia interfered on Trump's behalf in 2016, and now he is trying to make it happen again, this time by trying to push Ukraine.

The charges against the President are extremely serious. No belittling of these charges will hold any water. The charge to use foreign interference on behalf of a candidate in the 2020 elections is dramatic and awful stuff.

These charges concern our national security. They concern the sanctity of our elections and the potential corruption of our Nation's foreign policy for

personal political interests of the President of the United States. The gravity of those charges demands that Senators, if Articles of Impeachment are served to us, to put country over party and examine the evidence without prejudice or partisanship, which is why it is so disheartening, confounding, and deeply disappointing that, at this historic moment, I heard the Republican leader criticizing in such strident terms the process of the impeachment inquiry in the House for being too short and not including enough witnesses or due process for the President.

I respond on two counts. First, the Republican leader is simply wrong to suggest that the House process has been anything but deliberate, even-handed, and serious. Speaker PELOSI, the House Intelligence Committee, and the House Judiciary Committee are proceeding exactly how the Constitution prescribes. But, second, it is the height of hypocrisy to criticize the House process for being too short and not including enough witnesses when the Trump administration is the one blocking witnesses from testifying.

What hypocrisy? How can a leader even say it with a straight face? Will this febrile obeisance to President Trump never cease? Are they so afraid of him and his bullying that they can't admit the obvious truth and twist themselves in pretzel knots to make arguments that are so spurious? It is the height of hypocrisy to criticize the House for not including enough opportunities for the President to make his defense when the President is refusing to participate. It is the height of hypocrisy to say that there are not enough witnesses when we don't hear a peep out of the Republicans urging the President to allow the witnesses that the House wanted to come forward.

This hyperventilation about the length of the House process and the number of witnesses is simply ridiculous. The Trump administration is responsible for those things, not House Democrats. Everyone knows that. Everyone knows they have gone to court to block witnesses and documents.

I remind my colleagues, if the Articles of Impeachment are indeed passed by the House, Leader MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans must work with Democrats to set the parameters of a fair and impartial trial. Every Member of the Senate should support a fair process. The House is running a fair process now. We must do the same in the Senate if it comes to that.

All week, I have been urging my Senate Republican colleagues not to spread or even speculate about the dangerous myth that Ukraine—not just Putin—interfered in the 2016 elections. The myth was invented by Putin's intelligence services to deflect blame away from Putin while driving a wedge between the United States and Ukraine, one of Putin's top goals. When certain Senate Republicans are parroting Putin's talking points, we have a serious problem.

Hopefully, the overwhelming criticisms of the Members who did that this week have convinced them to stop and back off in the Republicans' absurd denial of fact and total defense of President Trump, even when it is obvious that he is not telling the truth. We have reached a low moment, and maybe the lowest of all was the mounting of Putin's conspiracy theory about Ukraine.

Now, another insidious conspiracy theory was doused with cold water this morning. The truth comes out, Republicans, sooner or later. Another theory was doused with cold water when it was reported that Attorney General Barr's handpicked prosecutor had reportedly found no evidence that the FBI probe into the Trump campaign was a setup. Republicans in the House, conservative media personalities, FOX News, and other blind partisan loyalists to the President have long conjured and peddled these deep-state conspiracy theories without evidence.

The Attorney General is even using the resources of the Justice Department—which could be exposing Chinese Communist Party's spies or tracking would-be radical terrorists or fighting opioids or tackling ransomware attacks on cities across the country—to investigate the origins of the 2016 probe. Attorney General Barr's actions are presumably in the hopes of turning up evidence to support these far-fetched theories.

Well, too bad, Republicans. Too bad, hard right. The Attorney General's handpicked prosecutor found no evidence to these conspiracy theories, that the investigation of President Trump was started with evil and political intent. The only evidence we have is that the outlandish loyalist theories peddled by President Trump and his allies to defend this administration are totally baseless.

BORDER SECURITY

Now, on another note, airport face scans, this morning, it was reported that the Trump administration will propose a rule to require U.S. citizens to have their faces scanned whenever they enter or leave the United States. This sounds like something out of China. Currently, all U.S. citizens are allowed to opt out of facial scans when entering or exiting the country. Now, the Trump administration is poised to remove that option and make facial scans mandatory for all travelers, including U.S. citizens.

I have significant concerns about what this policy would mean for the privacy of every American citizen. Just last year, a cyber attack of CBP compromised the personal information—in this case, it was license plates—and facial data of just under 100,000 people. Imagine if DHS were required to retain the facial data of every American who travels in and out of the country.

There are, of course, legitimate questions about whether the Federal Government is legally allowed to collect and store this data. Those questions

must be answered before—not after—the Trump administration moves forward with its new rules. On something as serious as this, Congress should debate this issue.

Regardless, I see no reason why the current opt-out policy must change, and I will work with privacy advocates in the Senate, like my friend Senator MARKEY, to legislatively prevent the administration from moving forward.

TRACED ACT

Another issue, robocalls, the House of Representatives yesterday passed bipartisan legislation to crack down on the tens of billions of robocalls that plague Americans every year. All of us are bothered by these darn robocalls. They come at the worst times, and they are on and on. You can't even shut them off.

Last year alone, Americans were battered by 48 billion—billion—robocalls. That is 150 calls per person, per year. Robocalls are annoying. They are persistent, and beyond that, many of them are dangerous to consumers. Foreign companies can make thousands of calls with a push of a button and can charge Americans simply for picking up the call. Can you believe that? Many are designed to scam elderly Americans. We have heard about elderly Americans who are frightened and send their life savings to these criminal callers. Many of the calls target institutions like hospitals and slow down important businesses.

The TRACED Act passed by the Senate in May and recently amended and passed by the House requires phone companies to block robocalls without charging consumers and will give the Justice Department and the FCC better tools to prosecute scammers who prey on unsuspecting—many elderly—Americans. I am proud to be a cosponsor of the original Senate bill. I pushed hard to move it forward. The Senate should now take action on the amended and expanded robocall legislation from the House and pass it before the year is out.

As we saw with the recent legislation to the democratic protests in Hong Kong, when there is bipartisan consensus on an issue, we can move swiftly to enact bipartisan legislation. These moments, unfortunately, are far too rare under Leader MCCONNELL, who has avoided the consideration of legislation on the floor, even when it has bipartisan support, but I hope as we enter the final few weeks of the year, Leader MCCONNELL will address the issue of robocalls and send this bipartisan to the President's desk.

I yield the floor.

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I know the American people, when they see what is happening in Washington, think that we fight all the time and we disagree about everything, but let me

just agree with my friend, the democratic leader, on the issue of the nuisance of robocalls.

But as important as that is to our quality of life and to protecting vulnerable seniors and others who may be misled by some of these deceptive calls, some of the most basic functions of the Federal Government have not been fulfilled, like appropriating the money that is necessary to support our men and women in uniform. The bipartisan spending caps bill that we agreed to in August has been walked back by our Democratic friends, and we find ourselves with a lot of uncertainty here at the end of the year in terms of what the future may hold in terms of our ability to actually get anything done, things like pass a highway bill. That is one thing that Republicans and Democrats can all agree on, is our disdain for traffic and congestion.

That is one thing we can work on together. We could work together to bring down drug prices, particularly the out-of-pocket costs for consumers with high deductibles and high co-pays. We could pass USMCA, the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement. All of these enjoy broad bipartisan support, but unfortunately, they are now all held captive by this impeachment mania which has stricken the House of Representatives, and it is scheduled to come over here to the Senate probably around the first of the year, depending on the schedule that Speaker PELOSI keeps in the House.

IMPEACHMENT

So while there are plenty of good ideas out there about things that we can work on together on a bipartisan basis, we all know that the Senate and the Congress has limited bandwidth. We can't do everything we want to do. We need to prioritize. I would hope that our priorities would be the American people's priorities and not the political priorities here of partisans in Washington, DC, but unfortunately, it looks to me like the partisans are winning and the people are losing. We need to keep fighting against that. But that is where we are right now, particularly with Speaker PELOSI's announcement this morning that the House is now going to proceed to draft Articles of Impeachment, something that has only been done four times in our Nation's history. This will be the fourth time.

We know what the outcome is likely to be with the 67-vote threshold here in the Senate, and I think all of us in America listened or have been exposed to anyway the various arguments on both sides of the question, but I don't really, frankly, expect anything new to come out of this. A lot of this is rehashed over and over again ad nauseam in order to justify a partisan impeachment process less than 1 year before the next general election. I would think we would be a little bit cautious about 535 Members of Congress working here in the Nation's Capital reversing the decision made by more than 60 million Americans in the last Presidential

election. That is a very sobering and serious matter indeed, but, unfortunately, I don't see this issue getting the kind of sober and serious consideration that the Founders contemplated or that the American people deserve.

AMERICAN ENERGY

Mr. President, on another topic, a number of our colleagues here in Washington have undertaken a radical approach when it comes to providing the energy that our country needs. As a matter of fact, if you think about it, it is because of the energy being produced by the oil and gas industry here in America today that the average price of gasoline is now probably roughly \$2.50 per gallon.

In Austin, TX, where I live, you can drive from the airport to my home, and you can see gas prices at \$2.15 a gallon. It is cheap relative to the historical prices. And you think about what that means in terms of consumers, regular, everyday working folks and families. It means they are able to spend money on other things that are important to them in their lives and not spend all of their income on filling up their gas tank. That is a huge, huge gift to the American people and consumers, but rather than focus on the benefits of what our innovative and entrepreneurial industry has done, we know that some of our friends here in Washington want to reorder the world in their own image. They say the goal is to completely eliminate the most affordable and reliable sources of energy. For what? Well, in pursuit of net zero emissions. I will talk more about that in a moment.

We remember earlier this year they introduced the Green New Deal—arguably the most extreme energy and climate proposal this country has ever seen. The Green New Deal is chock-full of utopian ideas but completely devoid of any pragmatic plans to implement any of its pie-in-the-sky proposals. It puts a range of unrealistic environmental and socialist policies under one big green umbrella with an unaffordably high pricetag.

The best evidence of how extreme this proposal is, is when it came up for a vote in the Senate. Not a single Senator voted for it—that includes all of the cosponsors of the proposal. That is not exactly a profile in courage, to tell the American people this is the solution to our environmental and energy problems, and then when it comes up for a vote, you run and hide. Nobody voted for it. If this proposal were not so terrifying, it would be a terribly bad joke.

While that may be the most extreme proposal we have seen, it is not the only one. We know some of our Democratic colleagues in the House have tried to impose government mandates. That means more regulation, more taxation, more control by Washington, all in an effort to achieve net zero emissions by the year 2050. In some ways, 2050 seems like a long way off, and in other ways it doesn't seem a long way

off, but in pursuit of programs that would address a problem in 2050, how about let's take care of the business that is sitting here right before us today first. We seem to have lost any sense of urgency in our most important priorities, like funding the government and funding the military.

On top of that, a number of our Democratic friends who are running for President claim we should ban fracking. I would really like to ask them if they even know what that is or how it works.

Some of them have said they also want to ban the export of crude oil. This month, for the first time in 70 years, America became a net exporter of oil. I will talk more about that in a moment.

Some are saying they even want to go so far as to ban the use of natural gas. Natural gas has been responsible for taking formerly coal-fired powerplants and putting them into a cleaner energy source, which has actually reduced emissions by a substantial amount, but, no, in pursuit of their pie-in-the-sky utopian dreams, the ideologues want to eliminate something that has been a very substantial improvement in terms of the reduction of emissions while providing affordable energy.

I think it is safe to say that we all agree—Republicans, Democrats, Independents, everybody—we should do what we can to protect our environment. In fact, we live here. We breathe the air. We drink the water. We should all be equally concerned about the environment.

I really think some of these proposals are nothing more than virtue signaling. They are not a solution to a problem. All of these folks are trying to paint the energy industry as the enemy in the process. Every good story needs a villain, and our friends on the left believe the energy industry that has provided that cheap gasoline so people can drive to work, take their kids to school, or go about their business is really the enemy, not our friend. Well, it is just not the case.

By the rhetoric you are hearing, you would think oil and gas companies have bankrupted the country, ruined our international alliances, and sent the entire globe into an energy famine. Well, that is not true. It is just the opposite of truth.

When you talk about global energy security, American oil and gas has reversed the tide of the energy landscape in our favor and supported our friends and allies around the world in important ways.

Our colleagues proposing these unworkable and unaffordable mandates would be wise to look at how the global energy landscape has changed over the last half century and consider the broader consequences of their proposal.

To understand the importance of American energy on the world stage, we need to rewind just a bit to the 1970s. At that time, the vast majority

of the world's oil and gas came from the Middle East, giving these nations a great deal of power. In fact, you may remember back in 1980 President Jimmy Carter announced something called the Carter Doctrine. He said if any foreign power would block the flow of oil through the Straits of Hormuz, it would be an act of war. That is what Jimmy Carter said in 1980, such was our reliance on imported energy from the Middle East. Our country dealt with this situation, and we addressed it responsibly and effectively.

We know another indication of our dependence on imported energy is when the United States supported our friend and ally Israel in the Yom Kippur war of 1973. OPEC, the organization of petroleum exported countries, primarily Middle East countries, banned the sale of crude oil to the United States. Those who are old enough to remember, remember that prices quadrupled, some States banned neon signs to cut down on energy use because they were worried about the energy that would be necessary to create that electricity, and a number of towns asked for citizens not to even put up Christmas lights. This was because our source of oil and gas was cut off from the Middle East, such was our dependence. Despite strong domestic production, we were still relying heavily on imports. Once that supply was cut off, we were caught flat-footed.

The Arab oil embargo brought to light the risk of our energy independence and underscored the need for America to do something about it. There was a consensus—has been a consensus—that we needed to grow our supplies here at home so we were less dependent on imports. So less than 2 years later, Congress, thinking we were doing a good thing, put a ban on export on American crude because we thought we needed it here and didn't want to export it abroad.

Over the next four decades, a lot has changed. Advancements in the energy sector, including hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling, have dramatically increased the production of American energy. As I said, for the first time in 70 years, America has become a net exporter of oil. That is how dramatically this has turned around.

In the process, we have achieved our goal of reducing our reliance on imported energy from dangerous and unsettled regions of the world, like the Middle East, but pretty soon we found ourselves sitting on a gold mine, and it became clear it was time to lift the export ban. In 2015, after 40 years of no exports, that is what Congress did. We did so because we believed, No. 1, we had more than we could use here in America, but we also believed this would be a huge boon to our economy. That was part of the equation. Just as we were able to reduce our reliance on oil from unreliable and unstable regions of the world, we knew that by exporting the oil that America produced, we could help other countries—our

friends and allies around the world—that were dangerously dependent on sources of energy from countries like Russia that is all too ready to use energy as a weapon. They say: Do what we say, and we will keep the energy and gas flowing. Do something we don't like, and we will shut you down.

In the not-so-distant past, many of our allies in Europe looked to Iran and Russia for their energy needs, and the Baltic States, all NATO allies, relied almost exclusively on Russia for their oil, gas, and electricity. Seven European countries depended on Russia for 80 percent of their gas, and on the whole, one-third of the gas Europe consumed came from Russia.

When our allies are looking to our adversaries for basic needs like heating, electricity, and fuel, that is a real problem. It is a strategic vulnerability not only for those countries but also for the United States.

Our friend John McCain had quite a sense of humor—those of us who knew him during his lifetime. He aptly described Russia as a gas station masquerading as a country. Russia's ability to export that energy to other countries was the lifeline for their country. I think Senator McCain hit the nail on the head, especially when Russia uses that energy as a weapon.

As I alluded, in 2009, we saw the vulnerability this created when Russia effectively turned the lights off in Ukraine. For almost 3 weeks, they shut down the energy supply. This affected at least 10 countries in Europe whose natural gas traveled through Ukraine.

Just as the United States realized how dangerous our foreign oil reliance was, our allies began to understand the implications of their dependency as well. Many of our friends in Europe have been working to diversify their energy supply, which is a good thing, and build strategic gas interconnectors between countries reliant on Russia for natural gas. Getting a diversity of sources is an insurance policy for those countries so Russia can't just cut off their energy supply.

Supplying our friends around the world with American oil and gas not only strengthens our security but it alleviates the power our adversaries, like Russia, hold in important regions of the world, like Europe.

In addition to increasing global security, American oil and gas has allowed us to provide affordable, plentiful, and reliable energy to countries struggling to provide power for their own citizens.

If you think about it, low-cost energy coming from America has the potential to be the greatest poverty reduction program in memory. For example, when I first traveled to India in 2004—if you drive from Delhi, the capital, to Agra, where the Taj Mahal is, you will drive across vast areas where the population is very poor. Huge swaths of that population lack access to things to cook their food with or electricity to light their homes. So what do they do? Well, they burn cow dung; they burn

coal; they burn wood pellets or other high-emission fuel sources. By America agreeing to export the energy we have here—the cleaner energy we have here—we are agreeing to help one of our closest friends and partners in the world and, in the process, help Prime Minister Modi and the leadership there lift more Indians out of this grinding poverty and relying on things like cow dung simply to cook their food.

Last year, we doubled the amount of LNG exported to India, and I dare say that the sky is the limit.

I think many of our Democratic colleagues should reflect back on the lessons of history before advocating a return to the 1970s when it comes to the way we approach American energy. I understand the importance of innovation in the energy sector to lower emissions, and I am all in, but rather than another government program, higher taxes, more regulation, or surrendering control of our freedom to Washington, DC, why don't we let the innovators, the entrepreneurs, come up with solutions? That is what has happened when it comes to American oil and gas. They came up with the answer, not Washington, DC, and we are all benefiting from the results.

When it comes to innovation, I have introduced legislation—and a number of our other colleagues have, too—to increase research dollars going into ways to lower emissions by looking at alternative ways to deal with energy production, like electricity. For example, there is a small natural gas-fired powerplant in La Porte, TX—which I visited with our friend Senator COLLINS from Maine—that emits zero carbon dioxide. That is a boon to the environment, and I think it also provides a solution to the oil and gas industry because what they do is pipe the CO₂ off the back end, and they use it to inject into the ground in the oilfields, so they produce more oil and gas. It is called secondary recovery.

Here at home, it is easy to take dependable energy for granted. We do it all the time. We don't worry about having the energy to cook our dinner at night or refill our cars' gas tanks. We take that all for granted. But the truth is, in countless countries in the world and for the majority of the world, it is a completely different story.

For our friends who advocate these utopian ideas like the Green New Deal, I don't begrudge their desire to improve the environment, but I would ask them to be more pragmatic when it comes to trying to solve the problem. I would ask them: Are you really trying to solve a problem? If you are, we want to work with you to reduce emissions, but if your goal is to pursue some fantasy that will not work and we can't afford, count me out. If you want to solve the problem, count me in.

American energy is simply powering the world. It is strengthening global security and lifting millions of people out of poverty. We need to continue to harness the power of one of our country's greatest national assets.

I will conclude there. I will continue to share some of my thoughts on the importance of American energy on the Senate floor. It is a topic bigger than one floor speech, and it will hopefully remind and encourage all of the Members of the Senate to work toward energy abundance and help keep energy affordable, which will improve the standard of living and the quality of the lives of all Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

REMEMBERING LAUREN BRUNER

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, on September 10, just a few months ago, Lauren Bruner, a veteran of Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, passed away. Mr. Bruner wasn't just any veteran. He was a veteran who served on the USS *Arizona* during the attack that morning.

On Saturday, December 7, millions of Americans across the country will pay tribute to the attack at Pearl Harbor National Memorial to commemorate what happened that morning, which brought the United States fully into the Second World War. Aboard the USS *Arizona* were 1,512 officers, sailors, and marines. The attack that day on December 7 killed 1,177 of them, and 335 brave people survived that morning. Lauren Bruner, who passed away September 10, was one of four who were on that ship that December morning in 1941 who have survived.

Lauren Bruner passed away at the age of 98, and on this Saturday, his ashes will be interred at the USS *Arizona* to join his shipmates—those who were lost that morning and others who have joined their fellow sailors, marines, and officers since.

Three men remain that are veterans of that war from the USS *Arizona*: Lou Conter, 98 years old; Ken Potts, 98 years old; and Donald Stratton, 97 years old from Colorado Springs, CO. Ken Potts and Don Stratton will join together for most likely the last time this Saturday as they will watch a live video feed of the ceremony at Pearl Harbor at the USS *Arizona* Memorial to view the interment of their shipmate, Lauren Bruner, at the USS *Arizona*.

The Senate was able to play a small role in recognizing what brought Don Stratton, Lauren Bruner, and the others together. You see, on that morning, when their ship was bombed, Lauren Bruner had been shot in the leg and Donald Stratton was on fire. The two of them and four of their other shipmates were on a control tower as the ship was on fire when a rope appeared. It was a line from the USS *Vestal*, a ship next to the USS *Arizona*. A line was thrown from a sailor named Joe George. They tied to the tower and were able to shimmy across 70 feet from the burning USS *Arizona*—while they were on fire—to the USS *Vestal*, to their safety.

Lauren Bruner had 70 percent of his body burned and was shot in the leg. Don Stratton suffered burns and spent a year in the hospital as a result. He

went back into the service to continue the rest of the war.

This Chamber in Congress helped make sure that the gentleman who threw that rope, that lifeline from the USS *Vestal* to the USS *Arizona*, received final recognition for his act of heroism. Joe George went for decades without recognition for his act of bravery to save these six sailors. He was able to receive just a couple of years ago, on December 7, 2017, the Bronze Star, in recognition of his acts.

December 7, 2017, also marked the last time that Donald Stratton was able to join the memorial service to commemorate December 7, Pearl Harbor. I have this picture here that I will show of Donald Stratton, who again this weekend will be joining Ken Potts as Lauren Bruner is interred to join the other men and women who lost their lives that morning.

This is an opportunity for us to once again say thank you to the 2,403 people overall at Pearl Harbor who were killed, to the people who survived, who went on to fight the Second World War, and our veterans today who live and continue to live a legacy that was given to them that December 7 morning.

On Saturday, as we join our families and do weekend work, I hope we will take a little bit of time to reflect once again on a dark chapter in American history that led to a great American century, to be thankful to the men and women who served our country, to the men and women who fight for our Nation each and every day, to the people like Ken Potts and Lou Conter and Donald Stratton, who continue to remind us each and every moment why this Nation is worth fighting for.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

TAX REFORM

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the importance of passing the expired tax credit provisions for many small businesses and industries that support families and help revitalize economic, depressed communities, and those that are underserved.

We all know that 2 years ago, the Republicans and President Trump enacted a \$2 trillion tax break for large corporations, and there was a lot of lobbying here that went in to getting that legislation passed. Yet, when it comes to these provisions, which are just about tax certainty in the Tax Code that has been there for decades that really needs to be reauthorized, Congress is not getting the job done, and we need to come to terms now about why it is so important to help small businesses have tax certainty in the code, to help families and communities, and to get this provision done by December 31.

We all know how important it is that these individuals, green energy companies, economic development, and many other aspects of the Tax Code are being

basically held hostage—since, I believe, 2017—by Congress's inattention to this issue. Our Tax Code is most effective when we have certainty, predictability, and when we have made decisions out of Congress that we think we do want to incent and motivate investment.

Renewables are a large source of private sector infrastructure investment, and the clean energy tax credits have allowed industry to scale and invest in technologies that have brought prices down in wind by 68 percent and solar prices by 88 percent. We have seen unbelievable growth in the energy sector because of our investments in the green energy tax credits.

Another example is the biodiesel tax credit that I worked on with Chairman GRASSLEY for years. That particular tax credit and its uncertainty and Congress's failure to act and give predictability have led to more than 10 biodiesel plants being closed so far, and there could be many more closed if we fail to act before December 31.

This means a loss of jobs and a loss of production of fuel. It means the loss of economic benefit to regions, and it means an impact to soybean and other sectors that have been a part of this growing economy. We need to act before more plants close.

I am very concerned about a particular facility in Grays Harbor, WA. While it may employ only 37 people at this point in time, Grays Harbor is an important point in the Washington State economy, located on our coast, and has many great attributes positioned for the future of trade. Not only do I want to see biodiesel grow, I want to see biodiesel exports grow. I think it is shortsighted that Congress can't get its act together to give people predictability and certainty about the Tax Code.

Let's talk about some other examples that are not just about clean energy—for example, the medical expense deduction. These deductions give taxpayers certainty on deductions for high out-of-pocket medical costs, and these are things that allow people to deduct qualified expenses that exceed 7½ percent of their gross income through 2018. This year, the threshold increased to 10 percent of adjusted gross income. If we are not going to give people certainty, it is going to be more dollars out of their pockets.

Another example is the mortgage debt forgiveness. When you lose your home, you should not have to pay taxes on your mortgage debt. That is what is going to happen if we don't give people certainty in the Tax Code. Without this provision, if your house is foreclosed on and the remaining debt forgiveness is in bankruptcy, the amount you would have to pay is the same amount you would have to owe instead of being forgiven.

So, to me, that inability to not have that mortgage debt deduction—it is just wrong that Congress can't get its act together. If you are going to get your act together and pass a major bill

for corporations, you should at least give small businesses and individual taxpayers the certainty they deserve in the Tax Code.

These provisions have been in the Tax Code for a long, long time. This is not like a surprise. It is not as if we haven't done this before. But instead of taking care of today's Tax Code before December 31, people are off making grandiose discussions.

I get it that some people on this side of the aisle would like to change and make corrections to the Tax Code, and other people on our side of the aisle would like to make a \$100 billion investment in child tax credit. Look, I am appreciative of that discussion, but quit waging that battle, and do our day job, and take the Tax Code and the expiring provisions, and give taxpayers certainty by the 31st of this month.

Another example is that the expired provisions would help address the high cost of higher education by allowing students and families to deduct up to \$4,000 for tuition and other high education costs. With total student loan debt of \$1.5 trillion and average student debt of over \$31,000, provisions like these on deductibility are very important.

On employment and economic development, nearly 26 percent of the provisions that are expiring are related to incentivizing employment investment in lower income communities.

The new markets tax credit. There is probably not a Member in the Senate who has not had a jurisdiction in their State use the new markets tax credit as one of the most effective economic development and community tools. This credit encourages private investments in low-income communities. Since the program was enacted in 2000, the new markets tax credit has delivered over \$95 billion in project financing to more than 6,000 projects and created over 1 million jobs.

Why can't we have certainty on the new markets tax credit by December 31 of this year? There is no reason.

The new markets tax credits expire, and where are we going to be on building affordable housing, healthcare facilities, community clinics, research and technology incubators, and mixed-use commercial programs? I see no reason why we can't get this job done. I have been working with Senators CARDIN and BLUNT on a bill that would make this program permanent, and, hopefully, we wouldn't have to go through this routine every year.

But take another example. The work opportunity tax credit has been an incredibly effective tool in helping individuals, including veterans, to find gainful employment. The work opportunity tax credit provides up to \$2,400 for hiring a certified person, including veterans and people receiving SNAP and TANF benefits. We know this program works. In my State, for each person certified to receive the tax credit, there is a net savings of \$17,700 in Federal subsidies. Where is the voice for

people who say: Let's give a tax credit and put people to work and actually reduce Federal subsidies? Oh, we are letting it expire again and giving uncertainty in the Tax Code.

Why? I am not sure because people are too busy posturing in a big debate instead of getting our basic tax extender homework done. Let's not continue to fail. Let's get out here and give these work opportunity tax credits the predictability people would like to see. In 2013, Washington had over 26,000 individuals certified with the tax credit, helping them find employment, and that represented a total of \$42 million in savings.

All of these issues I am talking about—investments in our communities, investments in tax credits that give businesses certainties so that they can continue to drive down costs, investments in low-income communities, investments to help retrain and get people off the subsidies—why can't we get this done? I hope that people will understand that these small businesses and these families don't have people running through the halls to lobby for them as they did on the big corporate tax break, but I guarantee you, they deserve the tax certainty. They deserve the predictability.

Yes, we can continue to debate the last big tax bill all through 2020. I guarantee you that we will spend a lot of time talking about it, and each side can raise their voice and wage their battle. But do not fail to get this basic job done that we keep failing to do—literally, not giving these businesses and individuals certainty, I think, since 2017. People keep thinking you are going to make it retroactive for 3 years. No, stop. Get this job done and give the certainty to small businesses and underserved communities that they deserve. Help them to succeed just like you helped big corporations.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

NOMINATION OF RICHARD ERNEST MYERS II

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I rise along with Senator BURR to urge our colleagues to support the confirmation of Professor Richard Myers to serve as a district court judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

President Trump has nominated an eminently qualified and principled individual to serve in the Eastern District. In his career, Professor Myers has worked as a journalist, a prosecutor, and a professor. Each step Professor Myers has taken in his professional career has prepared him for this role. From the newsroom to the courtroom to the classroom, Professor Myers has shown his commitment to the principles of truth, of justice, and of wisdom. I cannot imagine a more solid foundation upon which to place the responsibility of a district court judgeship than that of Professor Myers, which he has exhibited throughout his career.

Professor Myers is a first generation college graduate who has close ties to

Wilmington, where he has chosen to locate his chambers. Once confirmed, Professor Myers will hold court in Wilmington, the same city where he was raised, where he went to college, and where he was a journalist. North Carolinians are lucky to have someone like Professor Myers with his caliber and his sense of duty to represent us in the Eastern District of North Carolina.

I urge all of my colleagues to vote for Judge Myers', or soon-to-be Judge Myers', confirmation when it comes up later today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I also rise today to voice my strong support for the President's nomination of Professor Richard Myers to serve as a judge in the Eastern District of North Carolina. I might add for my colleagues that it is the longest court vacancy in the history of our court system. Professor Myers was reported out of committee on a strong bipartisan vote on October 31. I am pleased that the Senate will today consider his nomination.

I want to give my colleagues some additional insight into a man whom we are asking them to vote on and that goes beyond his stellar legal credentials. The first thing I want my colleagues to know is that Professor Myers embodies a work ethic and diligence that we deserve in all of our judges. As an immigrant of Kingston, Jamaica, Professor Myers is a first-generation college student in his family. He worked his way through his undergraduate degree at the University of Wilmington, and after college he pursued a career in journalism. He worked for the Wilmington Morning Star. It was his investigative reporting that gave him the desire to earn his law degree. He graduated magna cum laude at the University of North Carolina School of Law and began a legal career as a clerk for Judge David Sentelle of the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

Second, Professor Myers will be a judge who understands the value of public service, having made a career change from practicing at a prestigious private firm to contributing to our Nation's justice system following the attacks of September 11, 2001. He said that his change in career "was something I felt that I could do and that I owed to a country that had been really good to my family."

He did this first in the Central District of California and then in the Eastern District of North Carolina. Professor Myers then took a different path of service at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, instructing the next generation of lawyers to be people who, in his own words, "do the right thing every day."

If confirmed, Professor Myers will serve on the Eastern District of North Carolina and, as Senator TILLIS said, will hold court in Wilmington. Ironically, this court is currently meeting

in the building that once housed the Wilmington Morning Star, his first job as a reporter. However, when considering Professor Myers' story, it seems fitting that someone with the character, work ethic, and servant's approach to life will be returning to the building of his first post-college job wearing the robe of a Federal judge. I have faith in Professor Myers' ability to do the right thing every day in this critically important role, and I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on his behalf to our colleagues. This is well-deserving, and he will be an incredibly effective serving judge in our district court system. I urge my colleagues to support him unanimously.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Myers nomination?

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

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

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

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

The result was announced—yeas 68, nays 21, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 383 Ex.]

YEAS—68

Alexander	Cassidy	Enzi
Barrasso	Collins	Ernst
Blackburn	Coons	Feinstein
Blunt	Cornyn	Fischer
Boozman	Cotton	Gardner
Braun	Cramer	Graham
Burr	Crapo	Grassley
Capito	Cruz	Hassan
Cardin	Daines	Hawley
Carper	Duckworth	Hoehn
Casey	Durbin	Hyde-Smith

Inhofe	Murphy	Shaheen
Johnson	Peters	Shelby
Jones	Portman	Sinema
Kaine	Reed	Sullivan
Kennedy	Risch	Tester
King	Roberts	Thune
Lankford	Romney	Tillis
Leahy	Rosen	Toomey
Lee	Rubio	Warner
Manchin	Sasse	Wicker
McConnell	Scott (FL)	Young
McSally	Scott (SC)	

NAYS—21

Baldwin	Heinrich	Schumer
Bennet	Hirono	Smith
Blumenthal	Markey	Stabenow
Brown	Menendez	Udall
Cantwell	Merkley	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murray	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Schatz	Wyden

NOT VOTING—11

Booker	Moran	Rounds
Harris	Murkowski	Sanders
Isakson	Paul	Warren
Klobuchar	Perdue	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Lydon nomination, Calendar No. 489, be made pending.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Sherri A. Lydon, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

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

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

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

The result was announced—yeas 76, nays 13, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 384 Ex.]

YEAS—76

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

NAYS—13

Bennet	Hirono	Schumer
Blumenthal	Markey	Smith
Brown	Merkley	Van Hollen
Cantwell	Murray	
Gillibrand	Schatz	

NOT VOTING—11

Booker	Moran	Rounds
Harris	Murkowski	Sanders
Isakson	Paul	Warren
Klobuchar	Perdue	

The nomination was confirmed.

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert M. Duncan, of Kentucky, to be a Governor of the United States Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2025. (Reappointment)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 150

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I come to the floor again to seek unanimous consent for a resolution that commemorates the Armenian genocide.

In October, the House of Representatives passed a version of this resolution by a vote of 405 to 11—405 to 11. This vote was historic, and I applaud the bipartisan courage of those in the House to stand up for what is right.

For those here in the Senate who would consider objecting to this request, I urge you to think long and hard about what it means for your reputation, what it means for history, and what it means for the Senate as an institution. History is watching, and it will not look kindly on those who object to recognizing genocide.

In recent speeches before the Senate, I have laid out the case for why we must move forward on this resolution.

The simple threshold question for this body comes to this: Do we recognize a clear case of genocide when it happens, or do we let a country like Turkey determine our own views, determine our own sense of history, determine our own moral obligation, and determine the public record—a Turkey that today is committing atrocities against the Kurds in Syria, a Turkey that has teamed up with Russia and the Kremlin in purchasing the S-400 air defense system and just recently used it against an American F-16 to see if it works, and a Turkey that works to block forward movement in NATO on key national security objectives of the United States?

At what point do we say enough is enough? At what point do we simply move forward and acknowledge the truth? The truth is that the Armenian genocide happened. It is a fact. To deny that is to deny one of the monstrous acts of history. This denial is a stain on the Senate and our country. We have an opportunity to right that wrong and put the U.S. Senate on the right side of history.

Let's again review some of that history here today. More than 104 years ago, the Ottoman Empire launched a systemic campaign to exterminate the Armenian population through killings, forced deportations, starvation, and other brutal matters. How do we know this? How do we know this? Because U.S. diplomats were there. They wrote it down and sent it back to the State Department in Washington.

Henry Morgenthau, the U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916, wrote this in his memoir:

When the Turkish authorities gave the orders for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race; they understood this well, and, in their conversations with me, they made no particular attempt to conceal this fact. . . . I am confident that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when compared to the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915.

That is what Henry Morgenthau said. On June 5, 1915, the U.S. consul in Aleppo, Jesse Jackson, wrote to Ambassador Morgenthau, saying:

There is a living stream of Armenians pouring into Aleppo from the surrounding towns and villages.

The [Ottoman] Government has been appealed to by various prominent people and even by those in authority to put an end to these conditions, under the representations that it can only lead to the greatest blame and reproach, but all to no avail. It is without doubt a carefully planned scheme to thoroughly extinguish the Armenian race.

On July 24, 1915, in a report to Ambassador Morgenthau, the U.S. consul in Harput, Leslie Davis, stated: "Any doubt that may have been expressed in previous reports as to the Government's intention in sending away the Armenians have been removed. . . . It has been no secret that the plan was to destroy the Armenian race as a race. . . . Everything was apparently planned months ago.

In an October 1, 1916 telegram to Secretary of State Robert Lansing, U.S. Charge d'Affaires Hoffman Philip wrote, "The Department is in receipt of ample details demonstrating the horrors of the anti-Armenian campaign. For many months past I have felt that the most efficacious method of dealing with the situation from an international standpoint would be to flatly threaten to withdraw our Diplomatic Representative from a country where such barbarous methods are not only tolerated but actually carried out by order of the existing government."

And finally, Abram I. Elkus, who served as the United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1916-17, telegraphed the Secretary of State on October 17, 1916, stating "In order to avoid opprobrium of the civilized world, which the continuation of massacres [of the Armenians] would arouse, Turkish officials have now adopted and are executing the unchecked policy of extermination through starvation, exhaustion, and brutality of treatment hardly surpassed even in Turkish history."

That continues to verify that these diplomats saw the truth with their own eyes and communicated back to their superiors in Washington. They did their job, and the historical record proves it. Now it is up to individual U.S. Senators to do your job.

The Government of Turkey has funded lobbyists willing to trumpet lies and make excuses for these atrocities. The Turkish Government and its sympathizers have advocated for restrictive laws on expression and against legislation that recognizes the Armenian genocide. They will stop at nothing to bury the truth. I hope that individual Senators will not once again fall for it.

Any apprehension, any trepidation on the part of Senators who believe this resolution will somehow do irreparable harm to our relationship with Turkey is simply unfounded. Twenty-seven countries have recognized the genocide in one form or another. Some saw trade increases in Turkey following their recognition. Twelve members of NATO have recognized the genocide. They still work with Turkey on defense issues. They still have embassies in Ankara. Their relationships were not irreparably harmed. Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, and the Slovak Republic all did the right thing.

I say to my friends and colleagues that genocide is genocide. Senators in this body should have the simple courage to say it plainly, say it clearly, and say it without reservation.

In every session of Congress since 2006, I have introduced or cosponsored resolutions affirming the facts of the Armenian genocide. When I was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I was proud to preside over the passage of an Armenian genocide resolution out of the committee.

The work continues here today. If we are not successful this afternoon, I know we are not going to stop until we are. I am not going to stop until I go through every single Senator who is willing to come to the floor and issue an objection on behalf of the administration because I think Armenian Americans need to know who stands in support of recognizing the genocide and who opposes it.

I thank Senator CRUZ for joining me in this effort. He has been stalwart with me in this bipartisan resolution. I thank the 27 additional Senators who have been willing to stand up for a true, clear-eyed vision: Senators VAN HOLLEN, RUBIO, STABENOW, GARDNER, MARKEY, CORNYN, WARREN, ROMNEY, PETERS, PORTMAN, FEINSTEIN, WYDEN, DUCKWORTH, REED, SCHUMER, UDALL, HARRIS, WHITEHOUSE, SANDERS, KLOBUCHAR, CARDIN, BOOKER, CASEY, BENNET, ROSEN, BROWN, and CORTEZ MASTO. I thank them all.

Before I ask unanimous consent, I yield to my colleague from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I am proud to join with my colleague from New Jersey today in urging the Senate to take up and pass the bipartisan Menendez-Cruz resolution affirming U.S. recognition of the Armenian genocide.

From 1915 to 1923, the Ottoman Empire carried out a forced deportation of nearly 2 million Armenians, of whom 1.5 million were killed. It was an atrocious genocide. That it happened is a fact and an undeniable reality. In fact, the very word "genocide," which literally means the killing of an entire people, was coined by Raphael Lemkin to describe the horrific nature of the Ottoman Empire's calculated extermination of the Armenians.

We must never be silenced in response to atrocities. Over 100 years ago, the world was silent as the Armenian people suffered and were murdered, and many people today are still unaware of what happened.

With this resolution, we are saying that it is the policy of the United States of America to commemorate the Armenian genocide through official recognition and remembrance. We have a moral duty to acknowledge what happened to 1.5 million innocent souls. It is the right thing to do.

I certainly understand the concerns of some of my colleagues who worry that this resolution could irreversibly poison the U.S.-Turkey relationship and push Turkey into the arms of Russia, but I don't believe those concerns have any sound basis.

As my colleague from New Jersey pointed out, 12 NATO nations have similarly recognized the Armenian genocide. Yes, Turkey is a NATO ally, but allies can speak the truth to each other. We should never be afraid to tell the truth, and alliances grounded in lies are themselves unsustainable. Additionally, in the coming days, the Foreign Relations Committee will be

marking up an enormous package of sanctions on Turkey.

The horse has left the barn. There is no good reason for the administration to object to this resolution, and the effect of doing so is to deny recognition of this chilling moment of history.

Let me close by echoing the optimism the Senator from New Jersey expressed. We may well see an objection here today, as we did when Senator MENENDEZ and I previously came to the Senate floor and sought to pass this just a couple of weeks ago, but I believe that in the coming days and weeks, we will get this passed and that this objection, I hope, will be only temporary. I look forward to the day—hopefully very, very soon—when all 100 Senators, Democrats and Republicans, are united in simply speaking the truth, recognizing the genocide that occurred, and making perfectly clear that America stands against genocide.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Texas for his eloquent statement and for his forthrightness on this issue.

As in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 150 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask that the resolution be agreed to, that the preamble be agreed to, and that 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. CRAMER. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I don't think there is a single Member of the U.S. Senate who doesn't have serious concerns about Turkey's behavior both historically and currently. In fact, I support the spirit of this resolution. I suspect 99 of my colleagues do. At the right time, we may pass it, as Senator CRUZ has stated; however, I don't think this is the right time. If there is a right time, this certainly isn't it. It is largely because just hours ago, our President returned from the NATO summit in London with NATO leaders, where this was a topic of discussion with the leadership from Turkey—this being the acknowledgement of genocide, as well as the purchase of the S-400.

I want to have a clear readout of the President's interaction and discussion with President Erdogan and our delegation's negotiations with Turkey before adopting this resolution. I don't think we can take the risk of undermining the complex and ongoing diplomatic efforts which are in our national security interests as a country.

I, too, want to be on the right side of history. I believe we will be on the right side of history, but these negotia-

tions that the President is currently in are a part of getting on the right side of history.

I appreciate the ongoing conversations and still hope we will be able to overcome the challenges in the bilateral relationship with Turkey. We know what these challenges are, and we all share the goal of seeing them appropriately addressed, but there is no good alternative right now. In my view, adoption of this resolution today is unnecessary and might very well undermine that diplomatic effort at a key time.

I do not intend to continuously object to this resolution, but I believe it is appropriate for me to do so at this time, so I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, once again, I am deeply disappointed. This is the third time a Republican Senator has come to the floor to object to the genocide resolution—the recognition of the genocide resolution. There is never a good time. There is never a good time. In my view, there is always the right time, however, to recognize genocide as genocide.

My colleague from North Dakota actually sponsored H. Res. 220, the Armenian genocide resolution, affirming “the proper commemoration and consistent condemnation of the Armenian Genocide will strengthen our international standing in preventing modern-day genocides” when he was a Member of the House of Representatives. He was right then. He was right then. The time was right then, and the time is right now.

President Erdogan was here in the United States a couple of weeks ago. There was a meeting at the White House. A few of my colleagues had the privilege of joining the President expressing their discontent. Erdogan was given options—a way out of the dilemma that Turkey has put themselves in with the S-400. Basically, they were told either return to Russia and destroy them in our presence and/or give them to us, which, of course, Russia will never allow that to happen, for us to have their technology.

There was a deadline. It was yesterday. I waited until today to make sure that in fact we wouldn't intercede in any way with that possibility. Turkey, in the interim, while this is going on, they used the S-400 to fire at an F-16 to see if they could take it down. Really? Really?

So this premise that there was a meeting in NATO—well, there was a meeting in Washington, and then there was a meeting in NATO. They still haven't done anything on the S-400. They still haven't exercised any of the options that have been given to them.

I just want my colleagues to know that I intend to come once a week to the Senate floor, and all those who want to be listed on the wrong side of history, they have the option of doing

so. I am not going to cease until we do what is morally and principally right, and that is to recognize the Armenian genocide as a host of other nations have done as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I serve on the Senate Judiciary Committee, as a member of the Bar Association of Delaware, and a Member of the U.S. Senate. I am concerned about the transformation of our Federal judiciary under this current administration. I am particularly concerned about rising issues around qualification and competency. Let me speak to that, if I might, for a few minutes.

This Senate is doing precious little in terms of legislating, but we are moving at a breakneck pace to confirm President Trump's judicial nominees—roughly, 150 so far. During the entire 8 years of the previous administration, 55 circuit court judges were confirmed. Nearly that same number have been confirmed in just 3 years of the Trump administration—48. Nearly one in seven of all U.S. district court judges currently serving have been appointed by President Trump.

I am deeply concerned about the quality of some of these nominations. Some have never taken a deposition, argued a motion, let alone tried a case in court. The American Bar Association, the professional association of lawyers, has ranked nine of President Trump's nominees as “not qualified,” which is an exceptionally unusual and striking step for them to take.

This isn't about whether the President's nominees are conservative or not. I understand that elections have consequences and that a Republican President will more often than not nominate conservative judges. I have, in some cases, joined my Democratic colleagues in supporting qualified nominees put forward by the administration who have won support from their home State Senators and advanced through a bipartisan judicial nomination and confirmation process in our committee, but let's be clear. I will not stand by while this administration rams through nominees who are not just Republican and not just conservative but demonstrably unqualified.

I can't support nominees with deeply concerning records about their commitment to justice and to advancing a commonsense jurisprudence. I am not going to set a standard any lower than what has been required in previous administrations to serve on the Federal bench for many, many years.

We have heard in this Chamber and around this country that the quality of the Federal bench and the capabilities and the experience and the values and the judgment of those who serve on Federal benches across this country is an absolutely essential piece of our Constitution and our ordered liberty.

The cases that come before Federal courts are too important to tolerate incompetence, inexperience, or bias in the Federal judiciary.

Why does this matter both in terms of the process and the substance? The President has put forward nominees who, in my view, would take us backward on civil rights and voting rights, on women's access to healthcare, on laws that protect consumers and workers, and on the environment. Their decisions impact every American. Equally concerning is that Trump's nominees don't reflect the diversity of our Nation. We want litigants to go into a court and be able to have their day in court and be confident that the judge before them represents the breadth and range of America.

So far, of the 55 circuit court nominees confirmed, only 11 have been women, and they have been even less racially diverse. Of all of President Trump's nominees, 87 percent are White and 78 percent are men. I think the judiciary should reflect the diversity of the American people and have strong records and a wealth of experience. Sadly, that is not the case for several we have considered, and let me briefly speak to two.

President Trump's nominee to serve on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, who was recently confirmed, Lawrence VanDyke, raised serious concerns about his work ethic and his temperament. He was rated "not qualified" by the ABA based on concerns about his lack of knowledge of basic procedural rules and his commitment to being truthful. Six retired justices of the Montana Supreme Court questioned his fitness when he ran for the Supreme Court in Montana and expressed concerns about his partisanship and the possibility of corporate influence. He is opposed to basic civil rights and civil liberties for the LGBTQ community and made a range of statements that I think would be disqualifying under any circumstance.

Sarah Pitlyk, who this Senate just confirmed this week to a lifetime seat on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, has never tried a case, either criminal or civil, has never taken a deposition, has never examined a witness, and has never argued a motion in Federal or State court. The ABA unanimously rated her as "unqualified" for a lifetime seat in the Federal judiciary.

We can and we should do better than this. Of the entire bar of the State of Missouri, I am certain there are qualified, capable, and seasoned conservatives who could have been nominated for that seat in the entire Ninth Circuit. In particular, the State for which Mr. VanDyke was nominated, there are certainly abundant opportunities to choose qualified nominees. We can and we should do better than this.

In my State of Delaware, my senior Senator, TOM CARPER, and I worked together to help form a bipartisan judicial nominating committee to fill two

vacancies on our district court. We felt strongly we had to reach out to the White House and work with them to identify consensus nominees who would be the best candidates we could best support and whom the President could nominate. Ultimately, we had a very productive process, and the President nominated Maryellen Noreika and Colm Connolly, whom we both returned positive blue slips for. They ultimately have been confirmed by this Senate, seated, and now serve in our district court. This is how the process should work.

We should be able to consult back and forth between the executive and legislative until we find competent, capable, and qualified judges of whom we can all be proud of. The Senate should not be a rubberstamp for this administration, regardless of the quality of nominees that get sent forward.

I will continue to oppose President Trump's nominees who are undeserving of a seat on the Federal bench and unqualified to serve. It is, in my view, our responsibility to guard against the politicization of the Federal judiciary, and we should work together, not to tear down and destroy the traditions and rules of this Senate but to find ways to strengthen and sustain them. That is how we will move qualified and consensus nominees forward and protect the independent judiciary on which our very democracy rests.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO JOHNNY ISAKSON

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I come to the floor today because I missed an important occasion in the Senate. We had a celebration recently of one of our more beloved Members, Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON of Georgia.

There wasn't much that could keep me away from that, but there was no Senator going to Madrid to the conference of the parties to consider the Paris Climate Agreement. Speaker PELOSI asked me to come on her House delegation so that it was bicameral. As I think most people in this body know, I am pretty animated on that subject and couldn't say no. There are not many other things that could have kept me away.

I want to come now and make up a little bit for being absent that day and express my gratitude for JOHNNY's friendship to me over the years. I had the pleasure of going with him to the D-day anniversary on a codel that he led with his usual graciousness and patriotism. He was kind enough to join quite early on the bipartisan Senate Oceans Caucus I started and has been a very helpful part of that endeavor.

We have worked together on ways to improve healthcare planning for people who are in the late stage of illness to make sure that they get the care that they want and don't get a lot of care that they don't want and so that they have a chance to have their dignity and desire to be at home respected.

We have long been adherent of a biennial budget, and I am delighted that the bipartisan bill that Senator ENZI and I have put together will create a biennial budget. I am not sure we will be able to get that done before Senator ISAKSON leaves, but one way or the other, his interest in biennial budgeting will live on, I hope, successfully when we pass that.

We had a parity question about children's mental health hospitals that weren't getting counted and, therefore, weren't getting access to funding for the medical interns who come, and JOHNNY helped me fix that. It helped, I am sure, hospitals in Georgia, but it was particularly helpful to me for our Children's Hospital in Rhode Island.

We have a lot of Rhode Islanders who were killed in the Lebanon Marine barracks bombing, and there has been litigation against Iran for its responsibility for those deaths. It is not easy to collect a judgment on a foreign government, and JOHNNY has been very helpful to me in our joint efforts on Iran terror victims' judgments, helping us let the lawyers collect against assets of the Government of Iran.

Then, we regularly have done National Mentoring Month resolutions together.

But for all the things we have done together, that is not what I am going to miss about Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON. He is just one of the most decent, kind, good people who I have come across anywhere in my life and, certainly, one of the most decent and kind Members of the Senate.

With my very sincere apologies, JOHNNY, for missing the correct day, I hope you will understand how much it mattered to me to be elsewhere and why I had to be there. I come to the floor now, belatedly, to wish you all my very best with great affection and great respect.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote on the soon-to-be-pending nomination be called up.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

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

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

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

The result was announced—yeas 89, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 385 Ex.]

YEAS—89

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

NOT VOTING—11

Booker	Moran	Rounds
Harris	Murkowski	Sanders
Isakson	Paul	Warren
Klobuchar	Perdue	

The nomination was confirmed.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 533.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The clerk will report the nomination. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill clerk read the nomination of Patrick J. Bumatay, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Patrick J. Bumatay, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, Tom Cotton, John Boozman, Mike Crapo, Thom Tillis, Chuck Grassley, Jerry Moran, Kevin Cramer, John Barrasso, Mike Braun, Joni Ernst, Pat Roberts, John Cornyn, Roy Blunt, John Thune, Lindsey Graham, Roger F. Wicker.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 534.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Lawrence VanDyke, of Nevada, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Lawrence VanDyke, of Nevada, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, Tom Cotton, John Boozman, Mike Crapo, Thom Tillis, Chuck Grassley, Jerry Moran, Kevin Cramer, John Barrasso, Mike Braun, Joni Ernst, Pat Roberts, John Cornyn, Roy Blunt, John Thune, Lindsey Graham, Roger F. Wicker.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 530.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of John Joseph Sullivan, of Maryland, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Russian Federation.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of John Joseph Sullivan, of Maryland, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Russian Federation.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, Pat Roberts, John Cornyn, John Hoeven, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Roger F. Wicker, Marco Rubio, John Boozman, James E. Risch, John Barrasso, John Thune, Roy Blunt, Lamar Alexander, Mike Braun, Shelley Moore Capito.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 543.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Stephen Hahn, of Texas, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Stephen Hahn, of Texas, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, Pat Roberts, John Cornyn, John Hoeven, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Roger F. Wicker, James Lankford, John Boozman, James E. Risch, John Barrasso, John Thune, Roy Blunt, Lamar Alexander, Mike Braun, Shelley Moore Capito.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 452.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith, of Indiana, to be Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith, of Indiana, to be Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, Pat Roberts, John Cornyn, John Hoeven, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Roger F. Wicker, Marco Rubio, John Boozman, James E. Risch, John Barrasso, John Thune, Roy Blunt, Lamar Alexander, Mike Braun, Shelley Moore Capito.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions be waived.

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

The Senator for Louisiana.

5G

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, last week, of course, was Thanksgiving, a day that we all set aside in America to count our blessings. As we do that, we always say to ourselves: Gee, we really ought to be thankful every day of the year for the many blessings that have been bestowed upon us.

I know I say that to myself. So I thought today, for a few minutes, I would mention two things that I am especially thankful for, even though this isn't Thanksgiving, but it is another day that the Lord has blessed us with.

The first thing—and there are many things that I am thankful for, but the first thing I am thankful for that I want to mention today is the many public servants who care for and protect American taxpayer money.

I want to highlight one in particular: the Chairman of our FCC, Mr. Ajit Pai. Let me explain why I am thankful for this public servant—one among many who get up every day and work hard to protect taxpayer money. About 2 weeks ago, the Chairman of the FCC, over many obstacles, announced that he was going to hold a public auction for the C-band.

Why is that important?

We all have a cell phone now, and many of us have iPads and computers. The internet has changed our world and changed our lives. It has made it more complicated, of course, but on balance, I think the internet has been good for our lives.

We are about to move into a new phase of telecommunications called 5G. It stands for fifth generation. It is really an extraordinarily fast internet. It can carry huge amounts of data. The ingenuity of the American people takes my breath away.

I am pretty impressed with 4G, and 5G is going to be 100 times faster. It is going to make things possible like telemedicine, where a specialist in a field of surgery through robotics and now an incredibly fast internet can operate on a sick patient 1,000 miles away and save his or her life, thanks to 5G. We will be able to hook up all of our devices through 5G, saving time. It will give us more precious time to spend with our family. There will be driverless cars. Maybe I will not see them in my lifetime, but our assistants and our pages in the Senate will see them in their lifetime.

I could go on, but the point is, to make 5G possible, a lot of people have to work together. So 5G is made possible through the airwaves. When internet devices talk to each other, data in the form of radio waves—the scientists call them electromagnetic radiation—these radio waves go through the airwaves from one device to another.

We have all sorts of different airwaves. It is called spectrum. We have airwaves for radios and TVs. Well, 5G can be used in a number of different

airwaves or different parts of the spectrum. But one part of the spectrum, one part of the airwaves, is just perfect for 5G. It is called the C-band. That part of the airwaves is able to carry these 5G radio waves in a manner that can cover a huge geographical area but also carry lots of data.

It is called the C-band, and it is perfect for 5G. It is perfect. It is not too hot, not too cold. It is just right.

Some swamp creatures, both in government and out, came that close—that close—to getting control of the C-band, which is owned by the American people. Led by three foreign satellite companies, they had almost convinced the powers that be to give them the C-band—just give it to them—and let them decide who is going to get to use that C-band for 5G.

Oh, and, by the way, in picking the telecommunication companies that would get to use the C-band that was going to be given to them for free by the powers that be, these foreign companies were going to get to keep the money—about \$60 billion. That is just the upfront money—\$60 billion. That would build 7,000 miles of interstate in this country.

Not only would the companies get the \$60 billion, they would get to decide who could use the C-band, and they were that close. But the Chairman of the FCC stopped it. He is going to recommend next week—and I hope the rest of the FCC goes along with it. I am going to be there to watch. He recommended and is going to recommend that we have a public auction.

Doing a public auction is nothing new for the FCC. The FCC auctions off different airwaves all the time. In fact, the FCC in the last 25 years has held right around 100—I think it is 93—public auctions where anybody who wants to, any company that wants to—competition, moral good—can come in and bid on that part of the airwaves.

The good people at the FCC have brought in to the American taxpayer about \$123 billion in the last 25 years by auctioning off these airwaves and giving everybody a fair chance in a fully transparent way in front of God and country. That is the way it ought to be.

But a lot of swamp creatures were pushing hard for this private sale. The American taxpayer not only would have lost \$60 billion, they would have lost control of the C-band, which, according to the Communications Act, doesn't belong to me, doesn't belong to the businesses; it belongs to the American people.

We can't let our guard down. I have learned in my short 3 years here that those swamp creatures—if they can't get in the front door, they are going to try the side door, and if they can't make it through the side door, they are going to try the back door. We have a lot of money at stake here, so we have to remain vigilant.

I want to thank Ajit Pai for standing up. He made the right people mad.

That is easy to talk about, but it is hard to do. It takes courage, and he did it, and I wanted to single him out.

The second thing I want to say I am thankful for, among so many things, is this: I am so thankful for our neighbors to the North—Canada. I have visited Canada so many times. I am so proud to call them friends. There are 37 million people in Canada, some of the finest people that God ever put breath in.

We have fought together in wars. We have fought for freedom that we all take for granted. We trade with each other. I mean, the country is just a wonderful country with extraordinarily friendly, decent, and God-fearing people.

Our leaders squabble sometimes. That is just the way life is. Sometimes good friends have disagreements. We are having a few little disagreements right now. But on this beautiful Thursday, I just wanted to come and say how thankful I am that Canada is our friend and how honored I am to call them friends and how grateful I am for all 37 million of the fine men, women, and children in that great country.

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

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

WORLD BANK

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to discuss two issues: one dealing with the World Bank and another one dealing with the Department of Defense's inability to get clean audits.

Today the World Bank is releasing its country partnership framework with China. Reportedly, this includes \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion of loans to China per year and \$800 million to \$1 billion in private sector investment.

Keep in mind that the World Bank was created to help economic development in the world's poorest countries. China is now the world's second largest economy after the United States. Also, the United States is the World Bank's largest contributor. I think many Americans would question why so many American tax dollars are going to support low-interest loans in China.

In China, there is a large and growing body of evidence of human rights abuses in Xinxiang, including mass internment camps. Reports indicate that these camps are centers for social control and political indoctrination. Chinese authorities reportedly mistreat or even torture detainees, while requiring them to engage in forced labor and to renounce their religion and their culture. Yet the World Bank has supported a program called Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project in Xinxiang Province.

This is wording very close to what the Chinese Communist Party

euphemistically calls its internment camps. Plus, one reporter has uncovered documents that these schools purchased barbed wire, tear gas, and body armor using other funds—and, of course, funds are fungible.

Institutions like the World Bank have a great responsibility to further assess critical human rights risk and religious freedom, such as those exhibited in Xinxiang in any region where it lends money.

The World Bank's own social framework standards state that when assessing social risk and impacts, the Bank must assess threats to human security and impacts on the health, safety, and well-being of workers and project-affected communities. The Bank and other such institutions cannot adequately assess a project's full impact without monitoring and examining reports of widespread human rights abuses in any local area.

On November 16, the New York Times published leaked Chinese records indicating a coordinated effort going back years, directed by General Secretary Xi, to detain hundreds of thousands of Uighurs, Kazakhs, and other Muslims in internment camps and to unleash the tools of "dictatorship" on the Xinxiang Muslim population. Given these repeated reports about repression in Xinxiang that date back even years, it is hard to see how any project in that region could meet the Bank's social framework standards. There needs to be a periodic internal review of risk assessment mechanisms to ensure that they are appropriately calibrated to capture changing risk profiles.

I question whether the Bank's oversight processes are adequate, given its own assessments saw no issue with these intern camps that go by the professional name of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project—and I am referring particularly to those in Xinxiang Province.

In a statement on August 29, the World Bank stated that it had conducted supervision missions twice a year since the project started and that these missions included a review of social safeguards and a monitoring and evaluation review. The World Bank found "no evidence from subsequent reviews that funds were diverted, misused, or used for activities not in line with project objectives or World Bank policies and procedures."

However, just last month, the Bank raised the environmental and social risk ratings from moderate—the second lowest level—to substantial and then to high—the highest level. It is very disappointing that very little happened in upgrading the risk assessments on this project until after congressional attention, even with an internal whistleblower raising the matter. This seems like a failed process to me when routine audits and a whistleblower complaint do not catch anything, despite increasingly concerning reports in the media about mistreatment and abuse.

I have written a letter to the Bank President, Malpass, asking questions about these systemic concerns. Moreover, I questioned why a country like China, whose economy has far surpassed the threshold at which it is supposed to graduate from rural bank funding, is now and forever still taking loans.

The World Bank was created for a very worthwhile purpose—to help poor countries that cannot, on their own efforts, assess capital markets.

Both China and Russia today have well surpassed the World Bank's graduation threshold and have access to capital markets. Yet American taxpayers are called on to do more. Yet China then continues to borrow, on average, \$2 billion a year from the World Bank, making it one of the Bank's top borrowers—the second largest economy in the world and one of the Bank's top borrowers.

Countries like China or Russia that have seen the most economic progress should not seek to maintain access to the Bank's preferential lending rates and technical support. Moreover, these are our two major geopolitical foes.

I have previously highlighted China's intellectual property theft and foreign influence activities at American universities as just an example of other things I looked at in the case of China.

Russia's illegal occupation of territory in Georgia and Ukraine and its "active measures" against democracies, including the U.S. democracy, make it effectively an outlawed state. Meanwhile, China does substantial foreign lending of its own, which it uses as a tool of geopolitical influence over other countries.

Now, just think, through the World Bank, they get U.S. taxpayer dollars, and then the country is still so rich that they can lend to many other nations around the world to increase the geopolitical influence of China, and that country's lending does not follow international development finance standards, nor does China disclose the amounts or terms for loans that it offers.

Through the Belt and Road Initiative in China—this initiative is a process where they invest in other countries to have Chinese influence in these other countries—this Belt and Road Initiative in China has raised concerns about debt sustainability in recipient countries. They can invest money in these countries, and then they have an agreement that if the loan isn't paid, then China takes over, enhancing their influence—a lot of it for military purposes.

A March 2018 report from the Center for Global Development assessed the current debt vulnerabilities of the countries I just referred to, identified as potential Belt and Road Initiative borrowers. Out of the 23 countries determined to be vulnerable to debt distress, the center identified 8 countries "where Belt and Road Initiative appears to create the potential for debt

sustainability problems, and where China is a dominant creditor in the key position to address these problems.”

The World Bank, again using American tax dollars, should not be lending to wealthy countries that violate the human rights of their citizens and attempt to dominate weaker countries through their loans, whether it is done for military reasons or for economic reasons.

The State-Foreign Operations appropriations bill contains funding and authorization for a large capital increase for the World Bank. In other words, what I just said—the Senate is going to be facing this issue. I have developed an amendment to this bill that would insert language requiring the U.S. representative to the World Bank to work to defeat any project in a country that has reached the World Bank’s own “graduation threshold” and, secondly, that is designated by the State Department as a “country of particular concern for religious freedom” or is on the watch list for such designation. Both of those would include China and Russia at this point. Countries with broadly documented violations of international norms, human rights, and religious freedoms should not be given the privilege of accessing preferential loans that then limit access to other countries in need.

In other words, the second largest economy in the world—China—by getting loans from the World Bank at the same time they violate the human rights of their people—developing countries that need the loans and resources are not getting them because they are going to the wealthy nations.

DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, now to my second and last issue of the day, I want to report on the Pentagon’s most recent audit. Unfortunately, I don’t come with tidings of comfort and joy. Instead, I come with tidings of bad news. The Department of Defense has flunked another test of fiscal fitness yet again.

Last year, Congress authorized more than \$700 billion for the Department of Defense. That is a heck of a lot of money. That is why it is a big deal that the Pentagon is unable to account for the hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars it spends from one year to the next year.

Every dollar that Congress approves for the Defense Department is crucial for our national security. We must ensure that America’s sons and daughters in uniform are well paid and well equipped to defend our great country. That is why I work tirelessly to hold the Pentagon accountable.

The good news is, I am Iowa-stubborn. As a taxpayer watchdog, I won’t let go of this bone until I see results.

There is always bad news after you announce good news, so the bad news is that the Pentagon’s books are a big fiscal mess. In fact, the Defense Department is the very last Federal agency to comply with a Federal law—decades old—requiring an annual audit.

It took 28 years after Congress enacted a law requiring every Federal agency to conduct an annual audit for the Pentagon to get its ducks in a row. Unfortunately, the results are not what they are quacked up to be.

As required by the 1990 Chief Financial Officers Act, the bean counters at the Department of Defense disclosed their financial assessments for fiscal year 2019 to the Office of Inspector General, and then the IG deployed 1,400 auditors to 600 sites around the world. These 1,400 auditors at 600 different sites surveyed \$2.9 trillion in assets and tallied \$2.8 trillion in liabilities. After spending \$1 billion to conduct this audit, the Department of Defense inspector general was unable to issue a clean opinion, and that is the goal we seek.

Just like other Departments can get clean opinions, why can’t the Defense Department do so? The case is that year after year, the Pentagon is unable to account for tax dollars coming in and tax dollars going out.

Let me clarify for everyone listening just what happens when big spenders aren’t held accountable. Tax dollars are ripe for wrongdoers to harvest, and in the sprawling bureaucracy that we call the Defense Department, with bases and contractors stationed around the globe, Pentagon spending is vulnerable to waste, fraud, and abuse.

As a Pentagon watchdog, I have approached this podium nearly 50 times over my years of service here in the Senate to continually call attention to this wasteful spending by the Department of Defense. At the same time, I haven’t avoided calling attention to wasteful spending in any agency of the Federal Government, but the Department of Defense has gotten the majority of my attention. During this period of time, I have written countless oversight letters and launched scores of investigations. I have encouraged my colleagues to ramp up their oversight work so we can work together to fix what is broken.

The top dogs at the Pentagon have undertaken countless reform efforts, so I am not saying they don’t recognize it and try to do something about it, but after all these decades, they have not succeeded.

At the same time, besides undertaking countless reform efforts, they have issued endless promises. They have testified that real solutions are underway. Yet the results of the fiscal 2019 audit leaves this Iowa Senator underwhelmed. Tax dollars are still leaking through the Pentagon ledgers like a sieve. The plumbing is broken. When the fiscal faucets are cranked wide open, at full throttle, with no internal controls welded in place to prevent leaking, tax dollars are flushed down the drain.

Over many years of oversight, dozens of top dogs at the Defense Department and the top brass of U.S. military have come to my office to offer explanations for wasteful spending, particularly

after the Pentagon is on the receiving end of unflattering headlines. They have polished their skills when it comes to dodging tough questions posed by my oversight letters. They are also well prepared to rationalize hundreds of billions of dollars for their budget.

It is entirely reasonable and the responsibility of each of our lawmakers, including this one, to expect that they also have the ability to show us where the money goes. I have approached dialogue with our Nation’s military leaders in good faith, but time and again, I have been disappointed. The Defense Department’s inability or unwillingness to make necessary and overdue changes is quite unacceptable. The buck stops here, of course. As representatives of the American people, we owe it to our constituents.

The Defense Department is the largest Federal agency. Over time, bureaucrats get wrapped up in a culture of go along to get along. Some insiders take the brave step to blow the whistle on waste, fraud, and abuse; however, many are afraid to follow suit. That is why it is so important to inject a dose of reality into that swamp.

What is really needed is a massive transfusion to change the mindset. We have a lot of history, so let me remind my colleagues, Washington is an island surrounded by reality, and when it comes to fiscal responsibility, the Pentagon operates on its own special fantasy island. That is why Congress can’t rubberstamp the Defense Department’s budget with no accountability for how the money is spent.

Every time a new defense authorization funding bill is due in Congress, military leaders speak to the ever-changing threats facing our country. Those same military leaders plead for additional funding to defend our Nation, fight our enemies, and protect our interests abroad. Those military leaders discuss the growing threat of cyber attacks, aging and obsolete equipment, and say that cuts to their budget would hurt our men and women in uniform.

National defense, as we all know, is the No. 1 priority of the Federal Government under the Constitution, so Congress is understandably reluctant to deny money that military leaders say they need. That, in turn, is the reason earning a clean audit is shoved to the back burner at the Defense Department.

Congress and the Pentagon need to reach an understanding. Fiscal accountability and military readiness are not mutually exclusive. It is not an either/or scenario. Earning a clean bill of fiscal health would strengthen military readiness and boost support for necessary increases to defense spending in Congress and among the American people.

Money somehow seems to simply get lost at the Defense Department. It is unreasonable to concede that it is OK for military inventory to vanish into thin air. It boils down to sloppy bookkeeping and antiquated accounting

systems that can't generate reliable transaction data.

The problem starts at the top and filters down throughout the five quarters of the Pentagon. Let's consider the recent debacle with the TransDigm Group. In February, the Defense Department's Office of Inspector General released a report on spare parts that the Pentagon purchased from TransDigm. The result of that report exposed the rinse-and-repeat fiscal shenanigans corroding the accounting systems at the Pentagon. In the report, the IG analyzed 113 contracts between January 2015 and January 2017. It reviewed 47 spare parts the Defense Department purchased from TransDigm. In that window of time of only 2 years, TransDigm overcharged the Defense Department by more than \$16 million.

I will go out on a limb and suggest that Americans would rather spend \$16 million for the Defense Department on our men and women in uniform rather than overpaying for spare parts rip-offs to a defense contractor.

Congress can't sign blank checks to the Defense Department. We must work to ensure every dollar is present and accounted for. The Nation's strongest military in the world is managed by a Defense Department where taxpayer dollars seem to vanish without explanation, without receipts, and without accountability. Over the years, I have collected a laundry list of Pentagon waste, fraud, and abuse from \$436 hammers to \$640 toilet seats, \$117 soap dish covers, and \$999 pliers. Most recently, I have exposed \$1,200 reheatable coffee cups and \$14,000 toilet seat lids. The dirty laundry just keeps piling up, and at the same time it is piling up, it is soaking the taxpayer.

These wasteful expenditures represent just the tip of an iceberg. The simple truth is the Defense Department can't keep track of or doesn't seem to care where tax dollars are spent. Internal controls are weak and, in some cases, nonexistent. That has been reinforced by this second audit for which the Department of Defense inspector general can't give a clean audit.

For a second time, I would suggest that what the law of 28 years ago tries to accomplish is that every Department get a clean audit—a clean opinion on their audit. Let me repeat for a second time that the Defense Department is the only agency of the Federal Government that can't do that. The Defense Department, repeating again, is the only agency that hasn't been able to deliver a clean audit, despite spending billions of dollars to modernize its accounting system. All of that investment hasn't produced better systems.

No one except me and a few others ever talk about this, but it needs to be talked about and talked about a lot more, and it needs to be talked about in a deliberate way and very often. Congress can't allow the Defense Department to sweep this issue under the rug year after year.

The TransDigm fiasco is just one very small example, even though it cost the taxpayers a lot of wasted dollars. Price gouging has been going on for years at the expense of the taxpayer and military readiness. Top-level managers know all about what I am talking about, but they aren't doing a doggone thing to fix it. People must be held accountable for missing receipts, for lost financial information, for wasteful spending approvals, for questionable contracting agreements, and every other abuse of power that leads to more taxpayer dollars being squandered.

American households across the country scrutinize their spending and keep tabs on their bills. The Defense Department should approach spending no differently. That is why I pushed for an amendment to the latest Defense authorization bill that would have required the Pentagon to keep better track of its contracts and to make sure they do make reports to the Congress. While this amendment was ultimately not included in the bill, I want my colleagues to know that I am going to continue to push for more accountability.

Throughout my years of oversight, the Pentagon officials have claimed they want to reverse the cycle of cost overruns; they want to clean up their books; and they want to hold people responsible. Yet it never seems to happen. Although I am encouraged by the conversations I have had so far with new Defense Secretary Esper, the proof is in the pudding. From one administration to the next, it has been the same story. Business goes on as usual.

From the top of the chain of command to the rank and file, there is a pervasive mindset that assumes no one is watching over them and that no one cares. For four decades, this Senator has been watching, and this Senator cares. I am disgusted each time I discover another example of wasteful spending.

So I am here this very day, as I have been dozens of times before in my service in the Senate, to ask my colleagues in both the Senate and House of Representatives to join me in a crusade to stop wasteful spending at the Defense Department. There is a saying that goes something like this: no guts, no glory. Well, wasteful spending is gutting our military readiness and goring the taxpayers. There is no glory in that, and people might wonder then, why does this Senator bother?

I have fought fiscal mismanagement at the Defense Department for these many decades. I have launched investigation after investigation and come to the floor of the Senate to talk until I am blue in the face. Billions of dollars have been poured into a decades-long effort to right the fiscal ship at the Defense Department. The Pentagon has shelled out billions for several hundred partial orders, two complete audits, and endless technology updates to modernize its IT and accounting sys-

tems. Yet no one can tell us when, if ever, a clean audit might be possible. How can that be? After nearly 30 years of effort, there is no solution.

The Department of Defense can develop the most advanced weapons systems in the world, but it can't seem to deploy something as simple and common as an accounting system that is capable of capturing payment transactions and generating reliable fiscal and financial data. That is why it is a cakewalk for crooks to rip into the Pentagon's money sack from both ends and use a front end loader to freeload their way through this money pit.

Without a clean audit on the foreseeable horizon, there is no evidence to catch anyone's hands in the Pentagon cookie jar. The only way we will root out fraud and wasteful spending is by knowing where the money is being spent.

That brings me back to square one as I finish. We need a clean audit and a reliable accounting system. As I mentioned earlier, I am Iowa stubborn, and, by God, I am willing to work with my colleagues and go toe-to-toe with any administration, Republican or Democrat. I will work as long as it takes for us to see eye to eye to hold the Defense Department accountable once and for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The Senator from Maryland.

UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise to commemorate the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 25th Conference of the Parties, or COP25, which is taking place in Madrid until December 12 this year. I do so despite the cloud cast by President Trump's announcement of his intention to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement is a landmark effort to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to limit the global temperature increase in this century to 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels while pursuing means to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees.

The COP meetings now routinely represent the largest multilateral diplomatic events in the world. This year's conference is designed to take the next critical steps in the U.N. climate change process. Following agreements on the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement COP24 in Poland last year, a key objective is to complete several matters with respect to the full operationalization of the Paris climate change agreement.

Article 28 of the Paris Agreement specifies that after joining, no country can withdraw for 3 years, after which a 1-year waiting period must occur before withdrawal takes effect. The Trump administration recklessly filed withdrawal documents on November 4, 2019, making November 4, 2020, the earliest possible date the United States can be out of the agreement.

Withdrawal could not come at a costlier time. In an analysis I requested to review the Federal approach to prioritizing and funding climate resilience projects that address the Nation's most significant climate risks, the Government Accountability Office notes that there were at least 14 disasters whose costs exceeded \$1 billion each in 2018 alone.

GAO, an independent, nonpartisan agency that examines how taxpayer dollars are spent and is known as the congressional watchdog, reported that the total estimated costs reached at least \$91 billion in damage to public and private property.

"The cost of recent weather disasters has illustrated the need to plan for climate change risks and invest in climate resilience," the report says. "Investing in climate resilience can reduce the need for far more costly steps in the decades to come."

The Paris Agreement establishes a global goal on adaptation that consists of, one, enhancing adaptation capacity; two, strengthening resilience; and three, reducing vulnerability to climate change in the context of the temperature goal of the agreement. It aims at strengthening the national adaptation efforts, including through support and international cooperation. It recognizes that adaptation is a global challenge faced by all, including the United States.

Because U.S. withdrawal will not formally take effect until November 4, 2020, the U.S. team's posture at COP25 remains largely unchanged. A group of dedicated career civil servants will be on the ground.

Moreover, 2 years ago, numerous U.S. States, cities, Tribal nations, businesses, faith groups, universities, and others enhanced their presence at major international events, including COP meetings, to maintain and encourage American progress toward its national climate goals.

I am proud that nearly 100 Maryland pledgers "Are Still In." They comprise dozens of businesses—many small. We have over 10 cities, 6 counties, cultural institutions, faith and healthcare organizations, 20 universities, including my alma mater, the University of Maryland School of Law in Baltimore, and investors, such as the State treasurer of Maryland. They are all still in.

Members of the Senate "Are Still In." I am proud to be leading 38 of my colleagues in S. Res. 404. This bipartisan resolution expresses the sense of the Senate that the United States should be working in cooperation with the international community in continuing to exercise global leadership to address the causes and effects of climate change.

Prior to that, I led a congressional delegation of 10 Senators to COP21 that produced the Paris Agreement in 2015. Then the United States committed to lowering its contribution of greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025.

Business and labor "are still in." In a recent letter, 75 major CEOs and organized labor that are represented by the AFL-CIO stressed the importance of the Paris Agreement and the need for the United States to remain in it. This represents one of the most powerful recognitions ever from the private sector of the economic risks and opportunities that climate change presents to the United States and the world. The December 2, 2019, Joint Labor Union and CEO Statement on the Paris Agreement comprises a group of CEOs who employ more than 2 million people in the United States and union leaders who represent more than 12.5 million workers.

In 2009, at the Copenhagen COP 15, the U.S. helped to drive the creation of goals for developed nations to mobilize \$100 billion in public and private climate finance in 2020. The result was the Green Climate Fund, which helps to fund climate finance investment in low emissions, climate-resilient development.

The Paris Agreement affirmed and extended that \$100 billion goal. Although President Trump has stymied its funding, the fiscal year 2020 State Department and Foreign Operations bill the Senate Committee on Appropriations reported is the most favorable, forward-leaning on multilateral climate assistance in years, funding renewable energy programs at \$179 million and resiliency programs at \$177 million. In addition, the bill commits \$140 million to the Global Environmental Facility and \$10 million to the U.N. climate convention.

We must not forget the cooperation President Trump would have us forget. On a bipartisan basis, the U.S. Congress has uniformly rejected the President's repeated calls to zero out climate assistance funding. This rebuke represents the true, cooperative spirit of our country, once a global leader on climate issues.

I urge President Trump to reassert our Nation's strong leadership in implementing the Paris Agreement before the next Conference of the Parties. In the meantime, I applaud the courage of the general public, universities, faith-based groups, nonprofits, labor organizations, private sector companies, and State and local governments that have helped to step into the void President Trump created by his withdrawal from this agreement.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the need to pass the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

It is frustrating that we have to continue to speak about this issue. We have been so close for a long time now, but the lack of action on the part of the House leadership continues to unnecessarily delay its ratification.

Our neighbors to the north and south are our natural allies and trading part-

ners; yet our trade policy with them has not been updated in 25 years. The President and his team have worked very hard to get Canada and Mexico to the negotiating table to modernize our trade agreement in a mutually beneficial manner. That hard work has paid off in the form of the USMCA. It is ready for ratification, and the Senate is eager to get that done.

Unfortunately, we are at the mercy of the House, which must act first. The House leadership's refusal to move this trade deal is preventing additional job creation in our country, and it is sending the wrong signal to our trading partners across the globe. We ought to be spurring economic activity by striking fair trade agreements globally, not sitting on our hands and refusing to approve an agreement between two of our top trading partners.

A fair and mutually beneficial trade agreement with our neighbors to the north and south is very important to my home State of Arkansas. Canada and Mexico are No. 1 and No. 2 on the list of the top 10 destinations for Arkansas' exports. Arkansas is one of a handful of States that in recent years has consistently exported more than what it has imported from Canada and Mexico.

The World Trade Center Arkansas, which has played a valuable role in connecting businesses in my State with international partners for over a decade, recently released a report that summarizes trade and jobs data for the Natural State.

The center's report underscores the value trade brings to my State's economy and reinforces the fact that the path to a more prosperous, long-term outlook for Arkansas is through opening additional markets for our farmers, manufacturers, and small businesses. The report notes that, as of September 2019, trade in Arkansas supported nearly 350,000 jobs. This represents approximately 26 percent of the State's total employed labor force. It points to a direct correlation between job numbers and trade, documenting that trade-related jobs in the State have grown six times faster than total employment over the past few years.

More importantly, for our purposes here today, the report underscores just how crucial Canada and Mexico are for Arkansas' economy. The Natural State's exports to Canada amounted to \$1.2 billion last year. Our exports to Mexico totaled \$870 million in that same time span. Combined, these two countries account for a third of Arkansas' total exports. Nearly 69,000 jobs in my State are dependent on trade with Canada, and another 41,000 are tied to trade with Mexico.

Melvin Torres, the center's director of Western Hemisphere and European Trade, praised Arkansas' effective partnership with both countries for creating this "symbiotic and successful relationship." That relationship will only grow with the ratification of the USMCA.

Canada and Mexico aren't just important markets for my State. Each of our States stands to gain with the ratification of the USMCA. This landmark trade deal will create over 175,000 jobs, which will help to strengthen our economy and America's middle class. This overdue modernization of NAFTA will benefit workers in a wide array of industries. Manufacturing, tech, and more stand to gain from the USMCA. It will add much needed certainty for farmers and ranchers, who currently need every market they can get. Rural America is struggling right now, and approving this agreement will provide a shot in the arm for the rural economy.

The ratification of the USMCA, along with the recent deals that have been struck with South Korea and Japan, will show the rest of the world that the U.S. is open for business. Proving that the U.S. is negotiating in good faith to reach mutually beneficial outcomes for all parties that are involved could really move the needle in other ongoing trade standoffs.

The House leadership needs to get on the stick. The USMCA is too important for our Nation's economic future for it to be sitting in limbo while House Democrats focus on partisan goals.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

EQUAL PAY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this past October, the young women who make up the Burlington High School girls soccer team in Burlington, VT, made a statement: The time for equal pay is now. All they are looking for is for their leaders—leaders like us in Congress—to show the courage to make it happen.

It all began one Friday night in October, when, after scoring a goal to put them ahead in the closing minutes of a game against neighboring rivals South Burlington, four exuberant members of the soccer team removed their jerseys to reveal T-shirts emblazoned with this simple phrase: “#EqualPay.”

The reception to their silent statement was reminiscent of that moment when the U.S. Women's National Team made history in July, winning its second consecutive World Cup title. After a thrilling win over the Netherlands, the stadium in France was filled with chants of “Equal Pay! Equal Pay!”.

One Friday in October, the stands—though smaller—in Burlington, VT, erupted in the same way. The result? Yellow cards for the offending players, issued by a referee bound by the rules of the league.

The young women of the Burlington High School soccer team became overnight sensations. Within a matter of days, they had sold more than 2,000 of their now iconic simple white T-shirts, raising more than \$30,000 to support the Greater Burlington Girls Soccer League. Men were invited to pay an extra \$4 for the \$25 T-shirt: 16 percent of the cost, to represent the pay gender pay gap in Vermont. Their story was reported by local outlets like VT Digger and the Burlington Free Press, and it was featured on “Good Morning America” and on CNN. It even reached across the pond, where the UK's Daily Mail featured the team's advocacy. I ask unanimous consent that the report from VT Digger be printed in the RECORD following these remarks.

The lesson here is simple, and the voices could not be clearer: Equal pay for equal work should not be controversial, nor should it be challenged. Yet today in Vermont, a woman makes \$0.84 for every \$1 earned by a man. In some States, the gap is as wide as 70 percent. It is inexplicable. It is unacceptable. And it needs to stop.

Marcelle and I are proud to support the young women of the Burlington High School soccer team. We proudly wore our #EqualPay shirts outside the U.S. Capitol, standing in solidarity with these young Vermonters and with women everywhere who are simply demanding what should be theirs: equal pay for equal work.

Earlier this year, after the U.S. Women's National Team's inspiring victory at the World Cup, I reintroduced a simple resolution calling for the Federation Internationale de Football Association, FIFA, to immediately eliminate gender pay inequity and treat all athletes with the same respect and dignity, regardless of gender. It is straightforward. It is common sense. And it is past due.

Following the October game, the referee who issued the yellow card bought one of the team's #EqualPay shirts for himself. I find in that action a simple metaphor: There is simply no longer support for arcane practices that never should have existed. We should heed the call of the next generation and end these discriminatory practices, not just in sports but across the workforce. Equal pay for equal work should be the right of every person. It is as simple as that.

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

[From the VT Digger, Oct. 22, 2019]

BURLINGTON GIRLS SOCCER TEAM MAKES WAVES WITH EQUAL PAY ACTIVISM
(By Aidan Quigley)

BURLINGTON.—When Burlington girls soccer midfielder Helen Worden knocked in the take-the-lead goal during the team's Friday

night game against South Burlington with under five minutes to play, her team burst into a celebration.

Team members took the opportunity to lift their jerseys up to reveal #equalpay T-shirts underneath, with a few removing their jerseys to show the full #equalpay shirts.

While four members of the teams received yellow cards for removing their jerseys, the celebration—and team's efforts for gender pay equality—went viral over the weekend, with an appearance on “Good Morning America,” coverage on CNN and a slew of supportive messages.

The team was inspired by the U.S. women's national soccer team's campaign this summer during the World Cup. Members of the national team filed a federal lawsuit alleging gender discrimination against U.S. Soccer which stated the women's team generated \$20 million more in revenue than the men's team while earning a quarter of what the men were paid.

Klara Martone, Burlington's senior goalie, said that the players were working hard in school and wanted to bring attention to the pay gap in society.

“The idea that we could work this hard and still make less money just based on our gender is incredible to me,” Martone said. “We want to live in our adult lives in a world where we don't have to worry about making less money.”

The girls have sold 2,000 T-shirts and raised a total of \$30,000 as of Monday afternoon.

Worden went to France this summer and witnessed the United States win the World Cup. A chant after the win stuck with her.

“People were cheering ‘equal pay,’ and it was super inspiring,” Worden said. “So I came back and talked to (my teammates) about it, and said we should contribute in some way.”

Martone said that the team originally planned on wearing “equal pay” T-shirts for a dress-up day near the start of the season. But the idea gained steam, and the team decided to open up T-shirt orders to the community.

Junior right back Ruby Wool said at the start, having the boys soccer team wear the T-shirts was a “big victory” for the team.

“Those small little steps we were taking were so big to us, and with each thing everything is getting bigger,” Wool said. “As of right now, I don't think it's going to get smaller for a while.”

The team was “fuming” when they received yellow cards at Friday's game, Worden said.

As four of the girls received yellow cards, the crowd chanted “equal pay.”

“The good thing about the card was hearing everybody had our back,” senior center back/mid Maggie Barlow said. “That was one of the moments we were like, ‘wow, we have such a big support system.’ It was worth it because that was amazing to hear.”

Coach Jeff Hayes said some members of the South Burlington team came over the referees and requested that they not card their opponents. The cards were an exciting moment for the team, he said.

The four players who received yellow cards had to be temporarily taken out of the game and were not able to check back in before South Burlington equalized minutes later. The game ended in a 1-1 tie.

The effort was applauded by Brandi Chastain, a longtime member of the U.S. national team who famously removed her jersey in celebration of her penalty kick goal which won the 1999 World Cup.

“Thank you @bhsgirlssoccer for standing up, celebrating and taking your jerseys off for #equalpay Proud of you! #rolemodels,” Chastain tweeted Saturday.

Removing a jersey as part of a goal celebration—a popular goal celebration—is an

automatic yellow card under the regulations of FIFA, soccer's worldwide governing body.

Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy tweeted a photo of himself and his wife, Marcelle, both wearing the #equalpay jerseys.

"Marcelle and I stand with you!" Leahy tweeted.

The team has worked with Change The Story VT, a nonprofit initiative which works to address the wage gap and advance economic opportunities for women in the state. Women in Vermont earn 84 cents to every dollar earned by men, according to Change the Story.

Jessica Nordhaus, director of strategy and partnerships for Change the Story, said the organization has been helping the team with logistics and strategy. She said it has been a good opportunity to talk to young people about the wage gap, which isn't on track to close until 2048.

"They're doing the math and thinking, 'How old will I be in 2048?'" Nordhaus said. "We've just been so thrilled to see them take this issue on and do some of the activism that raises awareness about pay inequity."

The team is selling the jerseys for \$25, with a looser fit "men's" style jersey for \$29.80. The men's jersey is 16% more expensive, which is meant to even the wage gap.

The jerseys have #EqualPay on the front with the BHS Seahorse logo and Change The Story logos on the sleeves.

Funds raised in the sales will go to a local youth soccer Greater Burlington Girls Soccer League. The players are hoping the funds raised can help with outreach across the city and help make participants in the soccer league more reflective of the demographics of the city.

"We want them to be able to give scholarships to girls who aren't able to play," Barlow said. "We're working on widening access for all different kinds of people and making sure GBGSL has the means to fund that."

The team finished its regular season with a 9-4-1 record, receiving the fourth seed in the Division 1 playoffs. Burlington will face off with 13th seed Brattleboro Wednesday in the first round of the playoffs.

Hayes said he is excited for the playoffs and that the activism is bringing the team even closer together.

"It just brought this team so together," Hayes said. "They're so cohesive when they are using their voices. They're making waves in the community, and they're good waves."

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTER-AMERICAN FOUNDATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for 50 years the Inter-American Foundation, IAF, has partnered with grassroots organizations and underserved populations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to advance U.S. interests by helping to improve the lives of the hemisphere's poorest people, supporting civil society, and strengthening democratic institutions. I want to take this opportunity today, on IAF's 50th anniversary, to comment briefly on the foundation's accomplishments and on the unique value of small-grant, community-led development.

In 1969, Congress established IAF as an independent development agency charged with identifying and investing in community-led development solutions. IAF awards small grants, averaging \$280,000 over 4 years, directly to local organizations, eliminating costly

intermediaries and ensuring programs are led and implemented locally. IAF also requires grantees to contribute or mobilize their own cash or in-kind resources, helping to ensure sustainability and local investment in project success. On average, such counterpart investments mobilize \$1.31 for every \$1 invested by IAF.

According to IAF, in fiscal year 2019 alone, it awarded \$18.5 million to 97 grassroots organizations in 24 countries and mobilized \$20 million in grantee counterpart resources. IAF grantees created more than 2,500 partnerships with other organizations to share experiences and advance their missions, trained more than 200,000 people in new leadership and technical skills, and contributed to the creation of 11,000 new or improved jobs.

IAF's development model illustrates that if modest resources and technical support are provided directly to communities and their grassroots organizations so they can define their own needs, design their own solutions, and invest in their own communities, then local ownership, self-reliance, and sustainable development are possible.

IAF's small-grants model also enables it to be nimble and responsive to changing conditions on the ground, including natural and man-made disasters. In recent years, IAF has used its network of grantees in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru to support thousands of displaced Venezuelans and the communities where they have relocated.

After the signing of the Colombia Peace Accords in 2016, IAF launched the Colombian Peacebuilding Initiative and invested nearly \$2 million in 23 local Colombian organizations to support community-level peacebuilding and reconciliation.

In Central America, IAF has 98 projects addressing the causes of migration in areas likely to be targets of criminal gangs in order to help families and communities resist such violence. And since June 2019, IAF has awarded \$650,000 in grants to civil society organizations across the Eastern Caribbean focused on strengthening community-led disaster mitigation and preparedness planning.

IAF's successful approach to development is why we increased funding in the fiscal year 2020 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, which was reported unanimously by the Appropriations Committee in September. Increased funding would enable IAF to support a greater number of meritorious grant proposals, as the foundation was able to fund only 7 percent of the almost 800 proposals received in fiscal year 2019.

Regrettably, this model of donors directly supporting small-scale, local initiatives to design, implement, and sustain their own development solutions is more the exception than the rule. I hope IAF's 50th anniversary serves not only as an opportunity to commemorate its many accomplishments, but

also to reflect on the need to expand IAF's approach to development across the U.S. Government.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

● Ms. HARRIS. Mr. President, I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 375, the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 479, Richard Ernest Myers II, of North Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

Mr. President, I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 376, the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 489, Sherri A. Lydon, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

Mr. President, I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 378, the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 353, John L. Sinatra, Jr., of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of New York.

Mr. President, I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 379, the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 478, Sarah E. Pitlyk, of Missouri, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Missouri.

Mr. President, I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 380, the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 381, Douglas Russell Cole, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Ohio.

Mr. President, I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 381, the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 459, R. Austin Huffaker, Jr., of Alabama, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Alabama.

Mr. President, I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 382, the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 460, David B. Barlow, of Utah, to be United States District Judge for the District of Utah.●

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I

ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Arlington, VA.

Hon. JAMES E. RISCH,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(5)(C) of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), as amended, we are forwarding Transmittal No. 20-0A. This notification relates to enhancements or upgrades from the level of sensitivity of technology or capability described in the Section 36(b)(1) AECA certification 08-60 of August 1, 2008.

Sincerely,

CHARLES W. HOOPER,
Lieutenant General, USA, Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 20-0A

Report of Enhancement or Upgrade of Sensitivity of Technology or Capability (Sec. 36(b)(5)(c), AECA)

(i) Purchaser: Government of Italy.

(ii) Sec. 36(b)(1), AECA Transmittal No.: 08-60; Date: August 1, 2008; Military Department: Air Force.

(iii) Description: On August 1, 2008, Congress was notified by Congressional certification transmittal number 08-60 of the possible sale, under Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, of 4 MQ-9 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), 3 Mobile Ground Control Stations, five years of maintenance support, engineering support, test equipment, ground support, operational flight test support, communications equipment, technical assistance, personnel training/equipment, spare and repair parts, and other related elements of logistics support. These UAVs included AN/DPY-1 Synthetic Aperture Radar/Ground Moving Target Indicator (SAR/GMTI) systems with 0.3 to 3 meter resolution. The estimated total cost was \$330 million. Major Defense Equipment (MDE) constituted \$50 million of this total.

On November 18, 2009, Congress was notified by Congressional certification transmittal number 09-60 of the possible sale, under Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, of two unarmed MQ-9 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), one (1) Mobile Ground Control Station, maintenance support, engineering support, test equipment, ground support, operational flight test support, communications equipment, technical assistance, personnel training/equipment, spare and repair parts, and other related elements of logistics support. These UAVs included AN/DPY-1 Synthetic Aperture Radar/Ground Moving Target Indicator (SAR/GMTI) systems with 0.1 to 3 meter resolution. The estimated total cost was \$63 million. MDE constituted \$36 million of this total.

On December 17, 2009, Congress was notified by Congressional certification transmittal number 0C-09 of the possible sale, under Section 36(b)(5)(a) of the Arms Export Control Act, of a performance upgrade of the AN/DPY-1 SAR/GMTI systems aboard the four MQ-9s UAVs previously notified on transmittal 08-60 from 0.3 to 3 meter resolution to the same 0.1 to 3 meter resolution of the two MQ-9s notified on transmittal 09-60.

There was no increase in cost of MDE for this upgrade.

This transmittal reports the addition of Major Defense Equipment items beyond what was originally notified to include:

1. Retrofit of five (5) existing MQ-9A Block 1 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) to Block 5;
2. Retrofit of two (2) existing MGCS Block 30;
3. Addition of three (3) MQ-9A Block 5;
4. Addition of eight (8) Multi-Spectral Targeting Systems (MTS-B) AN/DAS-1A;
5. Addition of eight (8) General Atomics AN/APY-8 Lynx (exportable) Synthetic Aperture Radar/Ground Moving Target Indicator (SAR/GMTI) Systems, with Maritime Wide Area Search (MWAS) capability;
6. Addition of two (2) Mobile Ground Control Station (MGCS) Block 30, and;
7. Addition of twenty-seven (27) Honeywell H-764 Adaptive Configurable Embedded Global Positioning System/Inertial Guidance Units (EGI) with Selective Availability Anti-Spoofing Module (SAASM) (24 installed, 3 spares).

The retrofit, addition of aircraft, and inclusion of the above listed MDE not enumerated in the previous notifications will result in a net increase in MDE costs of \$180 million and non-MDE cost of \$138 million. These notifications represent the entirety of Italy's MQ-9 program, which will now increase in value from \$393 million to \$711 million.

(iv) Significance: As Italy continues with its plans to develop a robust MQ-9A fleet, it has requested additional aircraft. Enhancement of Italy's MQ-9A aircraft will provide strike capability to augment intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability. The proposed sale increases Italy's capability to participate in Europe and NATO security operations and supports the foreign and national security policies of the US by enhancing the ISR and strike capability of a major ally.

(v) Justification: Italy is a major political and economic power in NATO and a key democratic partner of the United States in ensuring peace and stability around the world. Italy requests these capabilities to provide for the defense of deployed troops, regional security, and interoperability with the United States.

(vi) Sensitivity of Technology:

1. The MQ-9A Block 5 Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) is UNCLASSIFIED. The highest level of classified information required for training, operation, and maintenance is SECRET. The MQ-9A Block 5 is a Medium Altitude, long-endurance (MALE) remotely piloted aircraft that can be used for surveillance, military reconnaissance, and targeting missions. Real-time missions are flown under the control of a pilot in a Ground Control Station (GCS). A datalink is maintained that uplinks control commands and downlinks video with telemetry data. Line-of-Sight (LOS) communications is enabled through C-Band datalink and Beyond-Line-of-Sight (BLOS) communications is enabled through Ku-Band Satellite Communication (SATCOM). Control of the aircraft and payload are done through direct manual inputs by the crew or through preprogrammed mission. Preprogrammed missions are planned and uploaded by the pilots via the GCS and are executed through the control of an onboard suite of redundant computers and sensors. Payload imagery and data are downlinked to the GCS. The pilot may initiate pre-programmed missions once the aircraft is airborne and lands the aircraft when the mission is completed. Pilots can change preprogrammed mission parameters as often as required. When operated BLOS, aircraft control is given to other strategically placed Ground Control Stations—per-

mitting remote split operations (RSO). The MQ-9A Block 5 is designed to carry 850 pounds of internal payload with maximum fuel and can carry multiple mission payloads aloft. The MQ-9A Block 5 will be configured for the following payloads: Electro-Optical/Infrared (EO/IR), Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), Electronic Support Measures (ESM), Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), laser designators, and various weapons packages. The MQ-9A Block 5 systems will include the following components:

a. The Ground Control Station (GCS) can be either fixed or mobile. The fixed GCS is enclosed in a customer-specified shelter. It incorporates workstations that allow operators to control and monitor the aircraft, as well as record and exploit downlinked payload data. The mobile GCS allows operators to perform the same functions and is contained on a mobile trailer. Workstations in either GCS can be tailored to meet customer requirements. The GCS, technical data, and documents are UNCLASSIFIED.

b. The Raytheon Multi-Spectral Targeting System-B (MTS-B) integrates electro-optical (EO), infrared (IR), laser designation and laser illumination capabilities to provide detection, ranging, and tracking capabilities specifically for high-altitude applications. This advanced EO and IR system provides long-range surveillance, high altitude target acquisition, tracking, range finding, and laser designation for the Hellfire missile and for all tri-service and NATO laser-guided munitions.

c. The AN/APY-8 Lynx Block 20 Synthetic Aperture Radar and Ground Moving Target Radar system provides all-weather surveillance, tracking and targeting for military and commercial customers from manned and unmanned vehicles. The AN/PY-8 Lynx Block 20SAR/GMTI radar system and technical data/documents are UNCLASSIFIED.

d. The Honeywell H-764 Adaptive Configurable Embedded Global Positioning System/Inertial Guidance Unit (EGI) contains the Force 524D GPS Receiver card with Selective Availability Anti-Spoofing Module (SAASM). The Force 524D is a 24-channel SAASM based GPS receiver with precise positioning service capability built upon Trimble's next generation GPS technology. The Force 524D retains backward compatibility with the proven Force 5GS while adding new functionality to interface with the digital antenna electronics to significantly improve anti jam performance. The host platform can select the radio frequency of digital antenna electronics interface. In the digital mode, the Force 524D is capable of controlling up to 16 independent beams.

(vii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: December 4, 2019.

FUTURE ACT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, today, the Senate passed a solution that Senator MURRAY and I reached to permanently fund historically Black colleges and universities and other minority serving institutions.

It is hard to think of a piece of legislation that would have more of a lasting impact on minority students and their families than this bill.

This legislation does two things:

First, it provides permanent funding—that is fully paid for—for HBCUs and other Minority-Serving Institutions attended by over 2 million minority students.

Second, after 5 years of bipartisan effort, it greatly simplifies the free application for Federal student aid—the

FAFSA—that 20 million families, including 8 million minority students, fill out every year to qualify for Federal student aid.

This bipartition provision—which was sponsored by Senators MURRAY, WHITEHOUSE, and GARDNER when it passed the Senate by unanimous consent last December—stops families from having to give their same tax information to the Federal Government twice—first to the IRS, then again to the Department of Education. Students give permission to the IRS and the Department of Education to share tax return data, which eliminates up to 22 questions on the FAFSA with one click.

It should eliminate most of the so-called verification process, which is a bureaucratic nightmare that 5.5 million students go through annually to make sure the information they gave to the Department of Education is exactly the same as they gave to the IRS. The president of East Tennessee State University recently told me that half the students applying to ETSU go through verification at some point.

According to the Department of Education, it helps taxpayers by eliminating up to \$6 billion each year in mistakes—both in overpayments and underpayments—in Pell grants and student loans.

It has taken 20 years to reach this result, and it would not have happened without Jeff Appel, a longtime staff member at the Department of Education who recently passed away, and Secretary DeVos and Secretary Mnuchin's commitment to getting this over the finish line.

In addition, I want to thank the staff who have been instrumental in getting the proposal to this place: on Senator MURRAY's staff, Kara Marachione, Bryce McKibben, Mary Barry, and Evan Schatz. Conor Sheehey with Senator SCOTT. Rebecca Howard with Senator JONES. Christopher Toppings with Senator BURR. Corey Linehan with Senator COONS. And from my staff, Robert Moran, Lauren Davies, Andrew LaCasse, Mary Catherine Cook, and David Cleary.

The final step to simplify the FAFSA is to pass additional legislation that will reduce the 108 questions on the FAFSA to a total of between 18 and 30 questions and make Pell grants predictable so students can know how much grant aid they will receive to attend college.

I and Senators MURRAY, SCOTT, JONES, BURR, and COONS worked together to reach this result and I am glad the Senate passed it today so it can be sent to the House and signed into law by the President before the end of the year.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, Florida is the Nation's greatest melting pot, with people from all over the Nation choosing to make Florida their permanent home. Our State has the best colleges and universities in the Nation, including many Historically

Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions. As Governor of Florida, I made historic investments in higher education and fought to keep higher education affordable so more students can get a great education in Florida.

As Senator, I will continue to fight to make sure every child has access to a quality education at a price they can afford. Our Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions are critical to the success of our State and the future of our children, and I will always work to support their mission.

The best way to support our colleges and universities is to make sure our economy is thriving so we have the resources we need to invest in education. That means we have to be careful about how we are spending taxpayer dollars. I have concerns any time the government permanently funds a program, no matter what that program is. Funding anything permanently means there is little to no accountability or oversight. We must be careful to regularly review every government-funded program to make sure taxpayers are always getting the best return on their investment.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR JORDAN KAHN

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge the service of my defense fellow, Maj. Jordan Kahn, who is approaching the end of his assignment with my office as part of his experience in the U.S. Air Force Legislative Fellowship Program.

Major Kahn joined my office in January and his dedication, work ethic, and intelligence quickly made him a trusted voice on my legislative team. A proud member of the U.S. Air Force, as well as being a graduate of both the U.S. Air Force Academy and the U.S. Air Force Weapons School, Jordan has deployed to defend our country multiple times, and because of his service, our Nation is safer. Most importantly, Jordan is a devoted husband and father, and I have had the pleasure of watching his family grow over the last year. In November, his wife Becky gave birth to their second son Haden, and his firstborn son Harrison has now dutifully taken on the responsibility of big brother.

As Major Kahn moves on to his next assignment, I have full faith that he will continue to excel as a leader in the Air Force and would trust him in the most demanding and sensitive positions within our Armed Forces. I extend my sincere thanks for his service to our Nation and our office and wish him and his family continued success in his future endeavors.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO BETH WALSH, CLAIRE PICHETTE, THOMAS REDMON, AND JUSTINE HURLEY

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the honor of recognizing four Montana school teachers for their passion and dedication to teaching math and science to young Montanans.

Beth Walsh from East Valley Middle School, Claire Pichette from Helena High School, Thomas Redmon from Daly Elementary, and Justine Hurley from White Sulphur Springs Elementary School have all been awarded the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching between 2017 and 2018.

The Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching is an incredibly high honor for school teachers across the country and no easy task to receive. A committee of Montana math and science teachers select finalists from a collection of statewide applications followed by a national panel of distinguished scientists, mathematician, and educators who select four national award winners from those finalists.

These teachers won the Presidential Award for their superior abilities to educate young Montanans on mathematics and science ranging from kindergarten children to seniors in high school. They show passion for their profession daily, and this award is a symbol of that passion. We are lucky to have such highly qualified teachers educating Montana students.

It is my honor to recognize Beth Walsh, Claire Pichette, Thomas Redmon, and Justine Hurley for their exemplary work educating Montana students. They are a true testament to the incredible education system we have throughout Big Sky Country. •

REMEMBERING DR. WOODIE FLOWERS

• Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, today I would like to recognize the life of an extraordinary individual, Dr. Woodie Flowers.

As an engineer, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—MIT—and an integral part of FIRST—For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology—Woodie helped educate and inspire people in New Hampshire, across the country, and around the world.

I first had the privilege of meeting Woodie in the 1980s when I was doing legal work for MIT. Almost immediately, I recognized his curiosity and eagerness to learn, his patience and understanding, and his desire to collaborate and work effectively. Woodie extended that ethos and enthusiasm for education to every aspect of his life, including through his groundbreaking leadership at MIT and FIRST.

Throughout his career, Woodie brought a unique vision to his work

and frequently stressed that technology is changing at a pace that the human brain simply cannot keep up with. This understanding and concern led him to emphasize the importance of teaching critical thinking and an allegiance to objective truth, which he posited would push back against the tribalism and binary thinking afflicting our society.

As part of his efforts to bridge division and expand human understanding, Woodie served as a mentor to countless students. While following Woodie in a speaking program was certainly a daunting task, I always looked forward to hearing his perspective at FIRST events. The major theme that Woodie sought to impart to students is that life is not a zero sum game. He would encourage them to work and compete with "gracious professionalism," where you work hard and challenge one another to be your very best, but you always engage with respect and kindness. FIRST encourages its participants to consider the annual contest as "coopertition," and Woodie used the opportunity to interact with the students and coaches as a way to reinforce this critical concept, that success comes through bringing out the best in each other and in humanity.

Woodie understood what a good leader should be, and his vision and example are characteristics that all Americans should aspire to. And in many ways, his confidence in our ability as human beings to solve problems and transcend our most basic tribal instincts, informed by science and grace, was uniquely American.

Dr. Woodie Flowers was one of the most brilliant, kind, and creative people I have ever met, and it was an honor to know him. I extend my condolences to Woodie's talented and magnificent wife and partner, Margaret, and their entire family. And I join them and the FIRST community in mourning an extraordinarily intelligent inventor, humanist, and American.

We will miss Woodie more than I can say, but I am certain that his legacy will live on through the countless lives he has touched. The world is a smarter, better, and more hopeful place because Woodie Flowers lived his life with love and purpose.●

TRIBUTE TO EDWARD HALL

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, today it is my honor to pay tribute to Edward Hall, an incredible 96-year-old Nevanadan, whose story began when he answered the call to defend his country. Eighty years ago, in 1939, at the age of 16, Ed lied about his age to enlist in the Army Air Corps and began his military service to our great Nation. On December 7, 1941, at just 18 years old, he found himself stationed at Hickam Field, Hawaii, working in the mess hall cleaning up and preparing for the day when he and his fellow troops heard an explosion. This was the beginning of the

Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and Ed, like many of the men on Hickam Field, stopped what he was doing to respond to this attack on the American Base. Without hesitation, Ed put his life on the line, joining in to rescue his fellow servicemembers injured in the ongoing attack. Along with an Army officer, Ed commandeered a truck and began driving around the flight line picking up the injured to move them to the base hospital in spite of coming into direct fire from Japanese aircraft. Upon returning from his third round of picking up the injured, Ed's truck was strafed by a Japanese Zero fighter and taken out of action, but Ed kept at it, as he knew helping the injured was his priority. As the bodies of the dead and injured continued to mount, Ed grabbed a .45-caliber pistol off one of his fallen comrades in order to have the means to defend himself from the attack as enemy planes buzzed the skies above him. He would go on to keep that pistol for the remainder of the war.

As the attack on Pearl Harbor ended, the recovery of the base began as Ed and other survivors began dealing with the aftermath of the attack and preparing for our formal entry into World War II in the Pacific theater. Ed kept going, as many of the members of that "greatest generation" did throughout World War II, embodying the American spirit of tenacity when faced with the greatest adversity, the spirit that eventually led to our success in defeating tyranny and enabling freedom across the world at the end of the Great War in 1945.

Mr. President, to Edward Hall, I join citizens across Nevada and the Nation in sending our sincere gratitude to him for his service to the United States. It is heroes like Ed whose service has kept our communities, States, Nation, and world safe. His service during World War II, and the life he has led since are an incredible testament to resilience, and we are forever grateful.

TRIBUTE TO ANTHONY BORDA

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Anthony Borda, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota over the past several months.

Anthony is a graduate of Nutley High School in Nutley, NJ. Currently, he is attending American University in Washington, DC, where he is majoring in political science. He is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Anthony for all of the fine work he has done and wish him continued success in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM SHUSTER DIXON

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize William Shuster Dixon, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota over the past several months.

Will is a graduate of Altoona Area High School in Altoona, PA. Currently, he is attending American University in Washington, DC, where he is pursuing a degree in communications, law, economics, and government. He is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Will for all of the fine work he has done and wish him continued success in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO ALEXANDER REINKE

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Alexander Reinke, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota over the past several months.

Alex is a recent graduate of South Dakota State University in Brookings, SD, having earned a degree in history. This spring, Alex plans to continue serving the public by working on Capitol Hill. He is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Alex for all of the fine work he has done and wish him continued success in the years to come.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:02 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, with an amendment, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

S. 151. An act to deter criminal robocall violations and improve enforcement of section 227(b) of the Communications Act of 1934, and for other purposes.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 12:22 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 5277. An act to amend section 442 of title, United States Code, to exempt certain interests in mutual funds, unit investment trusts, employee benefit plans, and retirement plans from conflict of interest limitations for the Government Publishing Office.

The enrolled bill was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. WICKER, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation,

with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 153. A bill to promote veteran involvement in STEM education, computer science, and scientific research, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 116-164).

S. 529. A bill to establish a national program to identify and reduce losses from landslide hazards, to establish a national 3D Elevation Program, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 116-165).

By Mr. WICKER, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment:

S. 906. A bill to improve the management of driftnet fishing (Rept. No. 116-166).

By Mr. WICKER, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, without amendment:

S. 908. A bill to provide for an equitable management of summer flounder based on geographic, scientific, and economic data and for other purposes (Rept. No. 116-167).

S. 914. A bill to reauthorize the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of 2009, to clarify the authority of the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with respect to post-storm assessments, and to require the establishment of a National Water Center, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 116-168).

By Mr. WICKER, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment:

S. 1148. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to require the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration to give preferential consideration to individuals who have successfully completed air traffic controller training and veterans when hiring air traffic control specialists (Rept. No. 116-169).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. ROBERTS, Mrs. CAPITO, and Mr. TESTER):

S. 2982. A bill to expand eligibility for certain housing programs for qualified volunteer first responders; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN:

S. 2983. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to seek to enter into an agreement with the city of Vallejo, California, for the transfer of Mare Island Naval Cemetery in Vallejo, California, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. ISAKSON):

S. 2984. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow for certain residential rental property to be depreciated over a 30-year period; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. McCONNELL:

S. 2985. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land in the State of Kentucky as the Kentucky Wildlands National Heritage Area, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. YOUNG (for himself and Ms. STABENOW):

S. 2986. A bill to amend part A of title XI of the Social Security Act to establish an interagency council on social determinants of health, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. TILLIS (for himself, Mr. COONS, Mr. CASSIDY, and Ms. HIRONO):

S. 2987. A bill to authorize U.S. Customs and Border Protection to seize imported merchandise that infringes a design patent, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. DAINES):

S. 2988. A bill to address the financial exploitation of veterans receiving pension from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. CASSIDY):

S. 2989. A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to clarify the mailing requirement relating to social security account statements; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. THUNE:

S. 2990. A bill to require that the Federal Government procure from the private sector the goods and services necessary for the operations and management of certain Government agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself and Ms. BALDWIN):

S. 2991. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct an independent review of the deaths of certain veterans by suicide, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. WARREN, Mr. MENENDEZ, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 2992. A bill to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to prohibit mandatory pre-dispute arbitration agreements, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. WARNER (for himself and Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina):

S. 2993. A bill to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act with respect to nursing facility requirements, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. GARDNER, Ms. ERNST, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. RUBIO, and Mrs. CAPITO):

S. 2994. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require information reporting with respect to the qualified opportunity zone tax incentives enacted by the 2017 tax reform legislation, to require public reports related to such tax incentives, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MANCHIN (for himself and Mrs. CAPITO):

S. 2995. A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress reports on patient safety and quality of care at medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. LEE (for himself, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mrs. BLACKBURN, and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 2996. A bill to amend the Head Start Act to authorize block grants to States for pre-kindergarten education, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 133

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) and the Senator from

Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) were added as cosponsors of S. 133, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the United States merchant mariners of World War II, in recognition of their dedicated and vital service during World War II.

S. 319

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 319, a bill to improve the reproductive assistance provided by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to severely wounded, ill, or injured members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their spouses or partners, and for other purposes.

S. 460

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 460, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the exclusion for employer-provided education assistance to employer payments of student loans.

S. 511

At the request of Mr. COTTON, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 511, a bill to promote and protect from discrimination living organ donors.

S. 622

At the request of Mr. JONES, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST) was added as a cosponsor of S. 622, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan by veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation, and for other purposes.

S. 670

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 670, a bill to make daylight savings time permanent, and for other purposes.

S. 800

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the names of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) and the Senator from Arizona (Ms. McSALLY) were added as cosponsors of S. 800, a bill to establish a postsecondary student data system.

S. 839

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 839, a bill to extend Federal Pell Grant eligibility of certain short-term programs.

S. 879

At the request of Mr. VAN HOLLEN, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) and the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 879, a bill to provide a process for granting lawful permanent resident status to aliens from certain countries who meet specified eligibility requirements, and for other purposes.

S. 880

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 880, a bill to provide outreach and reporting on comprehensive Alzheimer's disease care planning services furnished under the Medicare program.

S. 901

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of S. 901, a bill to amend the Older Americans Act of 1965 to support individuals with younger onset Alzheimer's disease.

S. 944

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the names of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) and the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) were added as cosponsors of S. 944, a bill to enhance the security operations of the Transportation Security Administration and the stability of the transportation security workforce by applying a unified personnel system under title 5, United States Code, to employees of the Transportation Security Administration who are responsible for screening passengers and property, and for other purposes.

S. 1015

At the request of Mr. BURR, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1015, a bill to require the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to review and make certain revisions to the Standard Occupational Classification System, and for other purposes.

S. 1032

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1032, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the definition of income for purposes of determining the tax-exempt status of certain corporations.

S. 1657

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1657, a bill to provide assistance to combat the escalating burden of Lyme disease and other tick and vector-borne diseases and disorders.

S. 1820

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1820, a bill to improve the integrity and safety of horseracing by requiring a uniform anti-doping and medication control program to be developed and enforced by an independent Horseracing Anti-Doping and Medication Control Authority.

S. 2001

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the names of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY),

the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 2001, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Willie O'Ree, in recognition of his extraordinary contributions and commitment to hockey, inclusion, and recreational opportunity.

S. 2179

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2179, a bill to amend the Older Americans Act of 1965 to provide social service agencies with the resources to provide services to meet the urgent needs of Holocaust survivors to age in place with dignity, comfort, security, and quality of life.

S. 2254

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2254, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to create a Pension Rehabilitation Trust Fund, to establish a Pension Rehabilitation Administration within the Department of the Treasury to make loans to multi-employer defined benefit plans, and for other purposes.

S. 2317

At the request of Mr. MURPHY, the names of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. SMITH) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2317, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to credit individuals serving as caregivers of dependent relatives with deemed wages for up to five years of such service, and to support State medical training programs for caregivers.

S. 2407

At the request of Mr. DAINES, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2407, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide criminal penalties for individuals acting as agents or attorneys for the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of a claim under a law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs without being recognized by the Secretary for such purposes, and for other purposes.

S. 2417

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the names of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) were added as cosponsors of S. 2417, a bill to provide for payment of proceeds from savings bonds to a State with title to such bonds pursuant to the judgment of a court.

S. 2599

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2599, a bill to amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganiza-

tion Act of 1994 to provide assistance to manage farmer and rancher stress and for the mental health of individuals in rural areas, and for other purposes.

S. 2638

At the request of Ms. DUCKWORTH, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2638, a bill to amend title 49, United State Code, to require small hub airports to construct areas for nursing mothers, and for other purposes.

S. 2661

At the request of Mr. GARDNER, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2661, a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to designate 9-8-8 as the universal telephone number for the purpose of the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system operating through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and through the Veterans Crisis Line, and for other purposes.

S. 2688

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) were added as cosponsors of S. 2688, a bill to amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to establish an Office of Technology Transitions, and for other purposes.

S. 2695

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the names of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE) were added as cosponsors of S. 2695, a bill to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to provide for the defense of United States agriculture and food through the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, and for other purposes.

S. 2715

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2715, a bill to develop and implement policies to advance early childhood development, to provide assistance for orphans and other vulnerable children in developing countries, and for other purposes.

S. 2753

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2753, a bill to amend title XVI of the Social Security Act to update eligibility for the supplemental security income program, and for other purposes.

S. 2754

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the names of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) and the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 2754, a bill to create jobs and drive innovation and economic growth in the United States by supporting and promoting the manufacture of next-generation technologies, including refrigerants, solvents, fire suppressants, foam blowing agents, aerosols, and propellants.

S. 2827

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the names of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2827, a bill to amend title 54, United States Code, to establish within the National Park Service the U.S. African-American Burial Grounds Network, and for other purposes.

S. 2898

At the request of Mr. INHOFE, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN) and the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) were added as cosponsors of S. 2898, a bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide for a full annuity supplement for certain air traffic controllers.

S. 2976

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2976, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide an election to advance future child tax credits in the year of birth or adoption.

S. RES. 112

At the request of Mr. BOOZMAN, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 112, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the United States condemns all forms of violence against children globally and recognizes the harmful impacts of violence against children.

S. RES. 260

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 260, a resolution recognizing the importance of sustained United States leadership to accelerating global progress against maternal and child malnutrition and supporting the commitment of the United States Agency for International Development to global nutrition through the Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy.

S. RES. 447

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 447, a resolution expressing serious concern about widespread irregularities in Bolivia's October 20, 2019, general elections and supporting the convening of new elections in Bolivia at the earliest possible date.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. MCCONNELL:

S. 2985. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land in the State of Kentucky as the Kentucky Wildlands National Heritage Area, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2985

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Kentucky Wildlands National Heritage Area Study Act".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) HERITAGE AREA.—The term "Heritage Area" means the Kentucky Wildlands National Heritage Area.

(2) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

(3) STATE.—The term "State" means the State of Kentucky.

(4) STUDY AREA.—The term "study area" means—

(A) Adair, Bath, Bell, Boyd, Breathitt, Carter, Casey, Clay, Clinton, Cumberland, Elliott, Floyd, Green, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Lincoln, Magoffin, Martin, McCreary, Menifee, Metcalfe, Monroe, Morgan, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Rowan, Russell, Wayne, Whitley, and Wolfe Counties in the State; and

(B) any other areas in the State that—

(i) have heritage aspects that are similar to the heritage aspects of the areas described in subparagraph (A); and

(ii) are adjacent to, or in the vicinity of, the areas described in that subparagraph.

SEC. 3. STUDY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation with State and local historic preservation officers, State and local historical societies, State and local tourism offices, and other appropriate organizations and governmental agencies, shall conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating the study area as a National Heritage Area, to be known as the "Kentucky Wildlands National Heritage Area".

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—The study shall include analysis, documentation, and determinations on whether the study area—

(1) has an assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that—

(A) represent distinctive aspects of the heritage of the United States;

(B) are worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use; and

(C) would be best managed—

(i) through partnerships among public and private entities; and

(ii) by linking diverse and sometimes non-contiguous resources and active communities;

(2) reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklore that are a valuable part of the story of the United States;

(3) provides outstanding opportunities—

(A) to conserve natural, historic, cultural, or scenic features; and

(B) for recreation and education;

(4) contains resources that—

(A) are important to any identified themes of the study area; and

(B) retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation;

(5) includes residents, business interests, nonprofit organizations, and State and local governments that—

(A) are involved in the planning of the Heritage Area;

(B) have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles of all participants in the Heritage Area, including the Federal Government; and

(C) have demonstrated support for the designation of the Heritage Area;

(6) has a potential management entity to work in partnership with the individuals and entities described in paragraph (5) to develop the Heritage Area while encouraging State and local economic activity;

(7) could impact the rights of private property owners with respect to private property; and

(8) has a conceptual boundary map that is supported by the public.

SEC. 4. REPORT.

Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are first made available to carry out this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives a report that describes—

(1) the findings of the study under section 3; and

(2) any conclusions and recommendations of the Secretary.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. CASSIDY):

S. 2989. A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to clarify the mailing requirement relating to social security account statements; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I along with Finance Committee member Senator CASSIDY are introducing a bill to make a common-sense, low-cost change to the law that will help American workers help themselves when preparing for retirement: The Know Your Social Security Act. This bill is simple: it clarifies the law about Congressional intent so that every worker over 25 receives a Social Security statement in the mail each year, unless the worker has accessed their statement online or declined to receive the statement in the mail.

The history of the Social Security statement runs right through the Senate and the "powerful" Committee on Finance. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan summed up the intent very well: "All of us pay into Social Security but rarely, until we become beneficiaries, do we ever hear from Social Security . . . in every paycheck, we see money withheld for Social Security, but we hear nary a word from the Social Security Administration. Let us take this simple step [sending statements] to reassure Americans that Social Security will be there for them." The Social Security statement has three goals: to provide workers with information about their Social Security benefits, to help workers plan for the future, and enable workers to review their earnings records.

After enactment and once fully phased in, every worker aged 25 and older received an annual statement from Social Security starting in the year 2000. After a few years, Social Security's website allowed workers to obtain a Social Security statement online. At the time, the online option was a good step forward in customer service. But as sometime happens, advances in technology shortchanged good intentions. Due to tight budgets, SSA came to view the online option as

“providing” the worker with a statement and fulfilling their responsibilities under the law. SSA stopped mailing the statements in 2011 in order to shift resources towards other priorities. Currently, only individuals over the age of 60 who are not receiving benefits receive statements through the mail.

Paper statements delivered through the mail are desirable because no action is necessary by the worker and the statement is a yearly reminder to the worker to think about the future. Research has shown that workers provided with statements are significantly more likely to save, more certain about their retirement income, and have higher satisfaction with their finances relative to those who are not provided with any type of financial planning materials. Providing Social Security statement through the mail is a simple policy that could help many workers, hopefully leading to better decisions about their financial future.

Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee Chairman JOHN LARSON and Ways and Means Committee Member VERN BUCHANAN are introducing the companion bill in the House of Representatives. We have received letters of endorsement from AARP, the Coalition for Paper Options, Justice in Aging, the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Social Security Works, The Arc of the United States and The Senior Citizens League. I ask that the letters be included in the RECORD following my remarks.

I hope my colleagues in the Senate will join us and cosponsor the Know Your Social Security Act. Together, we can work towards better retirement outcomes for all Americans.

AARP,

Washington, DC, December 5, 2019.

Hon. RON WYDEN,
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. BILL CASSIDY,
Committee on Finance,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR RANKING MEMBER WYDEN AND SENATOR CASSIDY: On behalf of our nearly 38 million members and all older Americans nationwide, AARP is pleased to endorse the Know Your Social Security Act. This bipartisan bill would once again place vital, paper Social Security statements in the hands of millions of Americans, to help them more effectively plan for retirement, identify fraud and correct earnings records, and better understand their stake in Social Security.

The Social Security statement is an essential financial planning tool that provides key information on an individual's earnings and payroll tax contributions record, as well as an estimate of their earned monthly benefits. When Social Security sends this statement through the mail, more Americans are able to better plan for their future, not only due to an increased understanding of their Social Security benefits, but also any gaps in their current retirement plan. Having a hard copy of your Social Security statement also allows an individual to spot and correct errors or even to detect outright fraud. Finding and correcting these errors in a timely manner will save workers and the Social Security Administration frustration, time and

money. Finally, when Americans receive an annual statement in the mail, it helps them better understand the importance of Social Security as part of their overall retirement plan. Paper statements are annual reminders, especially to younger workers, that they have contributed to Social Security and have earned a stake in the program.

AARP believes strongly that all Americans, unless they opt-out, should have access to their Social Security statements via mail. We are pleased to endorse the Know Your Social Security Act to once again place vital, paper statements in the hands of millions of Americans. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, or have your staff contact Tom Nicholls on our Government Affairs staff at tnicholls@aarp.org or (202) 434-3765.

Sincerely,

CRISTINA MARTIN FIRVIDA,
Vice President, Federal Financial Security
& Consumer Affairs,
Government Affairs.

—
THE COALITION FOR PAPER OPTIONS,
Washington, DC, December 5, 2019.

Hon. JOHN LARSON,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. VERN BUCHANAN,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. RON WYDEN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

Hon. BILL CASSIDY,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVES LARSON, BUCHANAN AND SENATORS WYDEN AND CASSIDY: The Coalition for Paper Options—an alliance of consumer organizations, labor unions, rural advocates, and print communications industry leaders is pleased to support today's introduction of the bipartisan Know Your Social Security Act. Introduced in both the House and Senate, the bill would require the Social Security Administration to reinstate the mailing of annual Statement of Earnings until such time as a wage earner establishes an on line account.

The annual Statement, which summarizes each wage earner's recorded earnings and projects future retirement benefits, has been hailed as one of the most important financial planning tools that most Americans will ever see, yet the Social Security Administration stopped sending these statements to workers in 2017 without any congressional oversight. A report released in February 2019 by the Social Security Administration's Inspector General highlights a tremendous decline in overall access since the primarily online-only policy took place.

The Know Your Social Security Act would reinstate the mailing of the Statements until a wage earner accesses their account through the my Social Security online portal. This would allow the Social Security Administration to economize as online participation grows, but it would not force citizens into online access before they choose or are able to manage it.

CPO's diverse network of allies includes: Consumer Action, Social Security Works, the National Consumers League, the National Grange, the National Association of Letter Carriers, as well as leading organizations in the paper and print communications industry is pleased to endorse this important legislation and offer our full support.

Regards,

JOHN RUNYAN,
Executive Director.

JUSTICE IN AGING,

Washington, DC, December 4, 2019.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVES LARSON AND BUCHANAN, AND SENATORS WYDEN AND CASSIDY: Justice in Aging endorses the bipartisan Know Your Social Security Act, which would reaffirm SSA's obligation to send Social Security statements by mail to all workers each year. This legislation would clarify SSA's duty and ensure that workers understand the Social Security benefits they are earning over time.

Many people are not fully aware of the level of Social Security benefits they could receive when they retire, nor do they realize the Social Security benefits available for themselves and their family members in the event that they experience a disability that limits their capacity to work, or in the event that they pass away leaving a spouse, young children, or other eligible survivors. The Know Your Social Security Act would provide this important information, as required, to ensure that workers know what benefits are available to them and their loved ones, allowing them to better plan for retirement as they age.

We believe it is not only SSA's obligation to send these statements, but that it is vital to the well-being of workers who need to be fully informed about their potential Social Security benefits in order to make decisions about their own working lives, and their retirement. While those who choose to get this information electronically and decline a paper statement have clearly demonstrated their awareness of the benefits they may receive in the future, others who do not make this choice should receive the statement in the mail as required under the law. For these reasons, Justice in Aging supports this bill.

Sincerely,

TRACEY GRONNIGER,
Director of Economic Security.

—
NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE,
SOCIAL SECURITY & MEDICARE,
Washington, DC, December 4, 2019.

Hon. JOHN B. LARSON,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Social Security,
Committee on Ways and Means,
Washington, DC.

Hon. VERN BUCHANAN,
Washington, DC.

Hon. RON WYDEN,
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance,
Washington, DC.

Hon. BILL CASSIDY, M.D.,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LARSON, CONGRESSMAN BUCHANAN, RANKING MEMBER WYDEN AND SENATOR CASSIDY: On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, I am writing to endorse your bill, the Know Your Social Security Act. This important legislation requires the Social Security Administration to resume annual mailing of Social Security statements to all of the estimated 150 million American workers who are eligible to receive them, and have not otherwise accessed them through their My SSA account.

For nearly a decade now, SSA has unilaterally nullified section 1143 of the Social Security Act by refusing to mail annual statements to workers, even though section 1143 is unambiguously clear that such statements are required. The Know Your Social Security Act clarifies that mailings are required, a measure that is deeply appreciated by our members.

The Social Security statement is one of the many enduring legacies left to the nation by one of its most distinguished lawmakers, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York. He regarded the statement as a simple and efficient way of building public

support and understanding for Social Security. Not surprisingly, Senator Moynihan's simple, common sense amendment worked as intended while SSA was producing the statements each year. In fact, the bipartisan Social Security Advisory Board of 10 years ago found that SSA's own survey data showed ". . . a link between increasing public confidence and receipt of a statement. People who receive a statement not only experience higher knowledge of Social Security than non-recipients, but also exhibit greater confidence that the program still will be there for them when they need it."

The statement also raises workers' awareness of the need for retirement planning by focusing attention on their future retirement income. It brings clarity to an often confusing and perplexing subject by providing a starting point: the individual's estimated Social Security benefits, whether retirement, survivors or disability insurance. From there, workers can determine how much more they need to save for the future. Because the statements were intended to reach people early in their working lives, they provided an invaluable service.

Another important function of the Social Security statement, if it were to be delivered annually as Congress intended, would be to enable workers to determine the accuracy of the wage records maintained by SSA for each worker. As the statement indicates, workers are encouraged to review the chart showing their reported wages, comparing the amounts reflected on SSA's records with information from the worker's own records. Workers are further advised that only they can perform this function and that they should report discrepancies to SSA as soon as possible.

We have been especially concerned that, with the suspension of statements to all but those who are approaching retirement age, few workers have been able to check the accuracy of SSA's wage records. The annual statement, when it was being provided, helped to assure that if errors were made in the reporting of wages that they could be quickly discovered and corrected while the required evidence would still be readily at hand. Since SSA has suspended the statements now for nearly a decade, we are concerned that many errors in SSA's records will go undetected and that some workers' benefits will be reduced as a result.

As mentioned earlier, one function performed by annual distribution of Social Security statements was to inform workers of the kinds of benefits that are provided by Social Security. The statements focused on retirement, survivors, and disability benefits. In other words, the statements were an invaluable annual tutorial of what Social Security is all about. And knowledge about Social Security is vitally important to the successful functioning of the program. We see that reflected in recent work that finds that one reason for the seemingly inexplicable recent decline in disability applications is related to the suspension of the statements. Clearly, restoration of annual production and mailing of the annual statements, as is required in the Know Your Social Security Act, is long overdue.

When it was being mailed to all eligible workers, the Social Security statement was able to play a critical role in building and strengthening public confidence in Social Security. It provided workers with the only meaningful pre-retirement information that they ever received about the program and the benefits they could expect when they retire or otherwise qualify for benefits. SSA's decision to end annual mailings has harmed many workers. It is time for SSA to undo this harmful decision and to follow the clear, unambiguous requirements of the law to

mail statements to all eligible workers. We applaud you for your leadership in introducing the Know Your Social Security Act, and look forward to working with you to enact this important measure.

Sincerely,

MAX RICHTMAN,
President and CEO.

—
PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA,
Washington, DC, December 5, 2019.

Hon. RON WYDEN,
Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. BILL CASSIDY,
Senate Finance Committee,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. JOHN LARSON,
Chairman, Ways and Means Social Security
Subcommittee, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.
Hon. VERN BUCHANAN,
Ways and Means Committee,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS WYDEN AND CASSIDY, CHAIRMAN LARSON AND REPRESENTATIVE BUCHANAN: Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) is pleased to support the Know Your Social Security Act. PVA is the nation's only Congressionally chartered veterans service organization solely dedicated to representing veterans with spinal cord injuries and/or disorders. Many of our members are among the nine million veterans who receive Social Security retirement or disability benefits. Others are among the millions of veterans and military service members and their families who will at some point in their lives benefit from the system.

For many years, the Social Security Administration (SSA) issued paper earnings and benefits statements that helped to inform people about their status under Social Security and what they might expect to receive in retirement or in the event of a catastrophic disability. When SSA suspended that practice in favor of disseminating the statements only online, it meant that people who lack internet access or who prefer not to set up an internet account lost access to that information. These Americans are then denied knowing about what they have accumulated on their earnings record, what their retirement benefits might be, what they might receive in spousal benefits, or the fact they qualify for disability or survivor benefits.

As we understand, your bill will clarify that the existing requirement in the Social Security Act for SSA to provide an annual Social Security Statement means providing this document by mail. The bill also clarifies that SSA may provide an on-demand electronic statement when an individual chooses electronic delivery. Furthermore, the bill stipulates that SSA has met its requirement to mail an annual statement if individuals have accessed their statements electronically in the prior year and have declined to receive their statements by mail for that year.

This will be a very helpful measure for millions of Americans. PVA thanks you for introducing the Know Your Social Security Act and urges Congress to do all it can to quickly pass this bipartisan legislation this year.

Sincerely,

HEATHER ANSLEY,
Associate Executive Director,
Government Relation.

SOCIAL SECURITY WORKS,
Washington, DC, December 5, 2019.

Hon. RON WYDEN,
Washington, DC.
Hon. JOHN LARSON,
Washington, DC.
Hon. BILL CASSIDY,
Washington, DC.
Hon. VERN BUCHANAN,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN WYDEN, SENATOR CASSIDY, CHAIRMAN LARSON, AND REPRESENTATIVE BUCHANAN: We strongly endorse your new legislation, the Know Your Social Security Act. Your bill clarifies the important law Congress passed in 1989 requiring the Social Security Administration (SSA) to mail Social Security earnings statements to those earning benefits with every paycheck.

When the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan introduced the original earnings statement legislation in 1988, he explained one of the reasons mailing these statements is so crucial:

"All of us pay into Social Security but rarely, until we become beneficiaries, do we ever hear from Social Security . . . every month, in every paycheck, we see money withheld for Social Security, but we hear nary a word from the Social Security Administration. Let us take this simple step [mailing Social Security earnings statements] to reassure Americans that Social Security will be there for them . . ."

Social Security earnings statements help families plan for the future. The statements educate and inform working families of the kinds of benefits they are earning. Crucially, they allow workers to identify and correct their earnings records in a timely way, when mistakes are made.

Your wise legislation clarifies that these vital statements are to be mailed automatically each year. Distressingly, more and more private and public services are being shifted to individuals. This should not happen with Social Security. As technology continues to progress, there is a tendency for administrators to lean more on its capabilities and move communications with consumers and constituents online. Electronic communication is, no doubt, desired in many situations. However, the most important financial documents, including the Social Security earnings statements, should default to postal mail as intended by the original law.

That the earnings statements be mailed is vital for everyone, including those who have access to high speed computing. Of course, not everyone even has this kind of access. For example, a 2018 Pew Research Survey found that one in four Americans living in rural areas lack reliable access to high speed internet service. Other polling found that Americans, even those between ages 18 and 29, prefer not to receive important information from SSA online.

We applaud your effort to clarify the requirement that annual Social Security earnings statements be mailed. We are confident that the Know Your Social Security Act will help strengthen Social Security. We look forward to working with you to see this excellent bipartisan legislation become law quickly.

Sincerely,

NANCY J. ALTMAN,
President.
ALEX LAWSON,
Executive Director.

THE ARC,
December 4, 2019.

Representative LARSON,
Washington, DC.
Senator WYDEN,
Washington, DC.
Representative BUCHANAN,
Washington, DC.
Senator CASSIDY,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE LARSON, REPRESENTATIVE BUCHANAN, SENATOR WYDEN, AND SENATOR CASSIDY: The Arc of the United States writes in support of the Know Your Social Security Act. The Arc is the largest national community-based organization advocating for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families.

Social Security statements are a crucial tool to help recipients plan for their future by providing accurate information about their earnings and future benefits. In addition, the statement raises awareness about all Social Security benefits, including about the Disability and Survivors Insurance that helps many people with I/DD. It also allows claimants to ensure that their earnings records are accurate.

We are concerned that recent changes that the Social Security Administration has made to only mail paper statements to a limited population means that many people are not receiving this crucial information. While the information may be available via the My Social Security website, less than half of registered users of the website checked their statements in 2018. In addition, low income households are less likely to have internet access at home and be able to access the website, despite the importance of Social Security benefits to these households; using library or other public internet sources is not advised due to the highly private nature of the information and the risk of identity theft. Without mailed statements, those households may have no access to the crucially important information about their Social Security benefits in the statement necessary to plan for their futures.

For these reasons, we strongly support the Know Your Social Security Act. Please contact Bethany Lilly at lilly@thearc.org with any questions, or if you would like to further discuss these issues.

Sincerely,

BETHANY LILLY,
Director of Income Policy.

THE SENIOR CITIZENS LEAGUE,
Alexandria, VA, December 4, 2019.

Hon. VERN BUCHANAN,
Washington, DC.
Hon. BILL CASSIDY,
Washington, DC.
Hon. JOHN LARSON,
Washington, DC.
Hon. RON WYDEN,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMEN BUCHANAN, CONGRESSMAN LARSON, SENATOR CASSIDY AND SENATOR WYDEN: On behalf of the approximately one million supporters of The Senior Citizens League (TSC/L), I would like to thank you for being true champions for Social Security beneficiaries.

The Senior Citizens League lends its enthusiastic support to the "Know Your Social Security Act". Every American who pays into Social Security has a right to see a written statement from Social Security to ensure their record is accurate, and to learn the estimated amount of their benefits. A printed record is important for those who do not have the means to routinely access their record electronically and it serves as a critical planning tool for determining the best

retirement dates. Regular receipt of these statements serves to remind and educate older workers of the benefits of staying in the workforce. Doing so strengthens retirement benefits, strengthens Social Security and strengthens our national economy.

As such, TSC/L salutes you for introducing legislation that clarifies that the requirement in the Social Security Act for SSA to provide an annual Social Security Statement means providing it by mail. The bill also clarifies that SSA may provide an on-demand statement electronically when the individual chooses electronic delivery for that request; and that SSA has met its requirement to mail an annual Statement if an individual has accessed their Statement electronically in the prior year and has declined to receive their Statement by mail for that year.

We look forward to informing our supporters about your leadership on this important issue in Congress. In the meantime, if we may be of assistance to you or your staff in any way, please do not hesitate to call upon us. Again, thank you for being a positive voice for America's seniors.

Sincerely,

RICK DELANEY,
Chairman.

By Mr. THUNE:

S. 2990. A bill to require that the Federal Government procure from the private sector the goods and services necessary for the operations and management of certain Government agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2990

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Freedom from Government Competition Act of 2019".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Private sector business concerns, which are free to respond to the private or public demands of the marketplace, constitute the strength of the United States economic system.

(2) Competitive private enterprises are the most productive, efficient, and effective sources of goods and services.

(3) Unfair Government competition with the private sector of the economy is detrimental to the United States economic system.

(4) Unfair Government competition with the private sector of the economy is at an unacceptably high level, both in scope and in dollar volume.

(5) Current law and policy have failed to address adequately the problem of unfair Government competition with the private sector of the economy.

(6) It is in the public interest that the Federal Government establish a consistent policy to rely on the private sector of the economy to provide goods and services necessary for or beneficial to the operation and management of Federal agencies and to avoid unfair Government competition with the private sector of the economy.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act, the term "agency" means—

(1) an executive department as defined by section 101 of title 5, United States Code;

(2) a military department as defined by section 102 of such title; and

(3) an independent establishment as defined by section 104(l) of such title.

SEC. 4. PROCUREMENT FROM PRIVATE SOURCES.

(a) POLICY.—In the process of governing, the Federal Government should not compete with its citizens. The competitive enterprise system, characterized by individual freedom and initiative, is the primary source of national economic strength. In recognition of this principle, it has been and continues to be the general policy of the Federal Government—

(1) to rely on commercial sources to supply the products and services the Government needs;

(2) to refrain from providing a product or service if the product or service can be procured more economically from a commercial source; and

(3) to utilize Federal employees to perform inherently governmental functions (as that term is defined in section 5 of the Federal Activities Inventory Reform Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-270; 112 Stat. 2384)).

(b) GENERAL RULE.—Except as provided in subsection (c) and notwithstanding any other provision of law, each agency shall obtain all goods and services necessary for or beneficial to the accomplishment of its authorized functions by procurement from private sources.

(c) EXEMPTIONS.—Subsection (b) shall not apply to an agency with respect to goods or services if—

(1) the goods or services are required by law to be produced or performed, respectively, by the agency; or

(2) the head of the agency determines and certifies to Congress in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget that—

(A) Federal Government production, manufacture, or provision of a good or service is necessary for the national defense or homeland security;

(B) a good or service is so critical to the mission of the agency or so inherently governmental in nature that it is in the public interest to require production or performance, respectively, by Government employees; or

(C) there is no private source capable of providing the good or service.

(d) METHOD OF PROCUREMENT.—The provision of goods and services not exempt under subsection (c) shall be performed by an entity in the private sector through—

(1) the divestiture of Federal involvement in the provision of a good or service;

(2) the award of a contract to an entity in the private sector, using competitive procedures, as defined in section 152 of title 41, United States Code, and section 2302 of title 10, United States Code; or

(3) conducting a public-private competitive sourcing analysis in accordance with the procedures established by the Office of Management and Budget and determining that using the assets, facilities, and performance of the private sector is in the best interest of the United States and that production or performance, respectively, by the private sector provides the best value to the taxpayer.

(e) CONTRACTED ACTIVITIES.—The head of an agency may utilize Federal employees to provide goods or services previously provided by an entity in the private sector upon completion of a public-private competitive sourcing analysis described in subsection (d)(3), and after making a determination that the provision of such goods or services by Federal employees provides the best value to the taxpayer.

(f) REGULATIONS.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall promulgate such regulations as the Director considers necessary to carry out this section. In promulgating such regulations, the Director shall assure that any State or territory, or political subdivision of a State or territory, complies with the policy and implements the requirements of this section when expending Federal funds.

SEC. 5. STUDY AND REPORT.

The Director of the Office of Management and Budget, after consultation with the Comptroller General of the United States, shall carry out a study to evaluate the activities carried out in each agency, including those identified as commercial and inherently governmental in nature in the inventory prepared pursuant to the Federal Activities Inventory Reform Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-270; 31 U.S.C. 501 note) and shall transmit a report to the Congress prior to June 30 of each year. The report shall include—

- (1) an evaluation of the justification for exempting activities pursuant to section 4(c); and
- (2) a schedule for the transfer of commercial activities to the private sector, pursuant to section 4(d), to be completed within 5 years after the date on which such report is transmitted to the Congress.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 1255. Mr. SCOTT, of South Carolina (for Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. JONES, Mr. BURR, and Mr. COONS)) proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 2486, to reauthorize mandatory funding programs for historically Black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 1255. Mr. SCOTT, of South Carolina (for Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. JONES, Mr. BURR, and Mr. COONS)) proposed an amendment to the bill H.R. 2486, to reauthorize mandatory funding programs for historically Black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; REFERENCES.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education Act” or the “FUTURE Act”.

(b) REFERENCES.—Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.).

SEC. 2. CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS.

Section 371(b)(1)(A) (20 U.S.C. 1067q(b)(1)(A)) is amended by striking “for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2019.” and all that follows through the end of the subparagraph and inserting “for fiscal year 2020 and each fiscal year thereafter.”.

SEC. 3. SECURE DISCLOSURE OF TAX-RETURN INFORMATION TO CARRY OUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965.

(a) AMENDMENTS TO THE INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1986.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (13) of section 6103(l) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended to read as follows:

“(13) DISCLOSURE OF RETURN INFORMATION TO CARRY OUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965.—

“(A) INCOME-CONTINGENT OR INCOME-BASED REPAYMENT AND TOTAL AND PERMANENT DISABILITY DISCHARGE.—The Secretary shall, upon written request from the Secretary of Education, disclose to officers, employees, and contractors of the Department of Education, as specifically authorized and designated by the Secretary of Education, only for the purpose of (and to the extent necessary in) establishing enrollment, renewing enrollment, administering, and conducting analyses and forecasts for estimating costs related to income-contingent or income-based repayment programs, and the discharge of loans based on a total and permanent disability (within the meaning of section 437(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965), under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, the following return information (as defined in subsection (b)(2)) with respect to taxpayers identified by the Secretary of Education as participating in the loan programs under title IV of such Act, for taxable years specified by such Secretary:

- “(i) Taxpayer identity information with respect to such taxpayer.
- “(ii) The filing status of such taxpayer.
- “(iii) The adjusted gross income of such taxpayer.
- “(iv) Total number of exemptions claimed, or total number of individuals and dependents claimed, as applicable, on the return.
- “(v) Number of children with respect to which tax credits under section 24 are claimed on the return.

“(B) FEDERAL STUDENT FINANCIAL AID.—The Secretary shall, upon written request from the Secretary of Education, disclose to officers, employees, and contractors of the Department of Education, as specifically authorized and designated by the Secretary of Education, only for the purpose of (and to the extent necessary in) determining eligibility for, and amount of, Federal student financial aid under programs authorized by parts A, C, and D of title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (as in effect on the date of the enactment of the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education Act) and conducting analyses and forecasts for estimating costs related to such programs, the following return information (as defined in subsection (b)(2)) with respect to taxpayers identified by the Secretary of Education as applicants for Federal student financial aid under such parts of title IV of such Act, for taxable years specified by such Secretary:

- “(i) Taxpayer identity information with respect to such taxpayer.
- “(ii) The filing status of such taxpayer.
- “(iii) The adjusted gross income of such taxpayer.
- “(iv) The amount of any net earnings from self-employment (as defined in section 1402), wages (as defined in section 3121(a) or 3401(a)), taxable income from a farming business (as defined in section 236A(e)(4)), and investment income for the period reported on the return.

“(v) The total income tax of such taxpayer.

“(vi) Total number of exemptions claimed, or total number of individuals and dependents claimed, as applicable, on the return.

“(vii) Number of children with respect to which tax credits under section 24 are claimed on the return.

“(viii) Amount of any credit claimed under section 25A for the taxable year.

“(ix) Amount of individual retirement account distributions not included in adjusted gross income for the taxable year.

“(x) Amount of individual retirement account contributions and payments to self-employed SEP, Keogh, and other qualified plans which were deducted from income for the taxable year.

“(xi) The amount of tax-exempt interest.

“(xii) Amounts from retirement pensions and annuities not included in adjusted gross income for the taxable year.

“(xiii) If applicable, the fact that any of the following schedules (or equivalent successor schedules) were filed with the return:

- “(I) Schedule A.
- “(II) Schedule B.
- “(III) Schedule D.
- “(IV) Schedule E.
- “(V) Schedule F.
- “(VI) Schedule H.

“(xiv) If applicable, the fact that Schedule C (or an equivalent successor schedule) was filed with the return showing a gain or loss greater than \$10,000.

“(xv) If applicable, the fact that there is no return filed for such taxpayer for the applicable year.

“(C) RESTRICTION ON USE OF DISCLOSED INFORMATION.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—Return information disclosed under subparagraphs (A) and (B) may be used by officers, employees, and contractors of the Department of Education, as specifically authorized and designated by the Secretary of Education, only for the purposes and to the extent necessary described in such subparagraphs and for mitigating risks (as defined in clause (ii)) relating to the programs described in such subparagraphs.

“(ii) MITIGATING RISKS.—For purposes of this subparagraph, the term ‘mitigating risks’ means, with respect to the programs described in subparagraphs (A) and (B),

“(I) oversight activities by the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Education as authorized by the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, and

“(II) reducing the net cost of improper payments to Federal financial aid recipients. Such term does not include the conduct of criminal investigations or prosecutions.

“(iii) REDISCLOSURE TO INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, STATE HIGHER EDUCATION AGENCIES, AND DESIGNATED SCHOLARSHIP ORGANIZATIONS.—The Secretary of Education, and officers, employees, and contractors of the Department of Education, may disclose return information received under subparagraph (B), solely for the use in the application, award, and administration of student financial aid or aid awarded by such entities as the Secretary of Education may designate, to the following persons:

“(I) An institution of higher education with which the Secretary of Education has an agreement under subpart 1 of part A, part C, or part D of title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

“(II) A State higher education agency.

“(III) A scholarship organization which is designated by the Secretary of Education as of the date of the enactment of the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education Act as an organization eligible to receive the information provided under this clause.

The preceding sentence shall only apply to the extent that the taxpayer with respect to whom the return information relates provides consent for such disclosure to the Secretary of Education as part of the application for Federal student financial aid under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

“(D) REQUIREMENT OF NOTIFICATION OF REQUEST FOR TAX RETURN INFORMATION.—Subparagraphs (A) and (B) shall apply to any disclosure of return information with respect

to a taxpayer only if the Secretary of Education has provided to such taxpayer the notification required by section 494 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 prior to such disclosure.”.

(2) CONFIDENTIALITY OF RETURN INFORMATION.—Section 6103(a)(3) of such Code is amended by inserting “, (13)(A), (13)(B)” after “(12)”.

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 6103(p)(4) of such Code is amended—

(A) by inserting “(A), (13)(B)” after “(13)” each place it occurs, and

(B) by inserting “, (13)(A), (13)(B)” after “(1)(10)” each place it occurs.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to disclosures made under section 6103(1)(13) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (as amended by this section) after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 4. NOTIFICATION OF REQUEST FOR TAX RETURN INFORMATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Part G of title IV (20 U.S.C. 1088 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SEC. 494. NOTIFICATION OF REQUEST FOR TAX RETURN INFORMATION.

“The Secretary shall advise students and borrowers who submit an application for Federal student financial aid under this title or for the discharge of a loan based on permanent and total disability, as described in section 437(a), or who request an income-contingent or income-based repayment plan on their loan (as well as parents and spouses who sign such an application or request or a Master Promissory Note on behalf of those students and borrowers) that the Secretary has the authority to request that the Internal Revenue Service disclose their tax return information (as well as that of parents and spouses who sign such an application or request or a Master Promissory Note on behalf of those students and borrowers) to officers, employees, and contractors of the Department of Education as authorized under section 6103(1)(13) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, to the extent necessary for the Secretary to carry out this title.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 484(q) (20 U.S.C. 1091(q)) is amended to read as follows:

“(q) reserved”.

SEC. 5. INCREASED FUNDING FOR FEDERAL PELL GRANTS.

Section 401(b)(7)(A)(iv) (20 U.S.C. 1070a(b)(7)(A)(iv)) is amended—

(1) in subclause (X), by striking “\$1,430,000,000” and inserting “\$1,455,000,000”; and

(2) in subclause (XI), by striking “\$1,145,000,000” and insert “\$1,170,000,000”.

SEC. 6. REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than each specified date, the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of the Treasury shall issue joint reports to the Committees on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and Finance of the Senate and the Committees on Education and Labor and Ways and Means of the House of Representatives regarding the amendments made by this Act. Each such report shall include, as applicable—

(1) an update on the status of implementation of the amendments made by this Act,

(2) an evaluation of the processing of applications for Federal student financial aid, and applications for income-based repayment and income contingent repayment, under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070 et seq.), in accordance with the amendments made by this Act, and

(3) implementation issues and suggestions for potential improvements.

(b) SPECIFIED DATE.—For purposes of subsection (a), the term “specified date” means—

(1) the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,

(2) the date that is 120 days after the first day that the disclosure process established under section 6103(1)(13) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended by section 3(a) of this Act, is operational and accessible to officers, employees, and contractors of the Department of Education (as specifically authorized and designated by the Secretary of Education), and

(3) the date that is 1 year after the report date described in paragraph (2).

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I have 5 requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today’s session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 5, 2019, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 5, 2019, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 5, 2019, at 2 p.m., to conduct a closed hearing.

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Subcommittee on Communication, Technology, Innovation, and The Internet of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 5, 2019, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE, TRANSNATIONAL CRIME, CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GLOBAL WOMEN’S ISSUES

The Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women’s Issues of the Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, December 5, 2019, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Angel Ventling, a State Department fellow in my office, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of the day.

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

MERRILL’S MARAUDERS CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 743 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 743) to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the soldiers of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), commonly known as “Merrill’s Marauders”, in recognition of their bravery and outstanding service in the jungles of Burma during World War II.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 743) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 743

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Merrill’s Marauders Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) in August 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and other Allied leaders proposed the creation of a ground unit of the Armed Forces that would engage in a “long-range penetration mission” in Japanese-occupied Burma to—

(A) cut off Japanese communications and supply lines; and

(B) capture the town of Myitkyina and the Myitkyina airstrip, both of which were held by the Japanese;

(2) President Roosevelt issued a call for volunteers for “a dangerous and hazardous mission” and the call was answered by approximately 3,000 soldiers from the United States;

(3) the Army unit composed of the soldiers described in paragraph (2)—

(A) was officially designated as the “5307th Composite Unit (Provisional)” with the code name “Galahad”; and

(B) later became known as “Merrill’s Marauders” (referred to in this section as the “Marauders”) in reference to its leader, Brigadier General Frank Merrill;

(4) in February 1944, the Marauders began their approximately 1,000-mile trek through the dense Burmese jungle with no artillery support, carrying their supplies on their backs or the pack saddles of mules;

(5) over the course of their 5-month trek to Myitkyina, the Marauders fought victoriously against larger Japanese forces through 5 major and 30 minor engagements;

(6) during their march to Myitkyina, the Marauders faced hunger and disease that were exacerbated by inadequate aerial resupply drops;

(7) malaria, typhus, and dysentery inflicted more casualties on the Marauders than the Japanese;

(8) by August 1944, the Marauders had accomplished their mission, successfully disrupting Japanese supply and communication lines and taking the town of Myitkyina and the Myitkyina airstrip, the only all-weather airstrip in Northern Burma;

(9) after taking Myitkyina, only 130 Marauders out of the original 2,750 were fit for duty and all remaining Marauders still in action were evacuated to hospitals due to tropical diseases, exhaustion, and malnutrition;

(10) for their bravery and accomplishments, the Marauders were awarded the "Distinguished Unit Citation", later redesignated as the "Presidential Unit Citation", and a Bronze Star; and

(11) though the Marauders were operational for only a few months, the legacy of their bravery is honored by the Army through the modern day 75th Ranger Regiment, which traces its lineage directly to the 5307th Composite Unit.

SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the award, on behalf of Congress, of a single gold medal of appropriate design to the soldiers of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) (referred to in this section as "Merrill's Marauders"), in recognition of their bravery and outstanding service in the jungles of Burma during World War II.

(b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Treasury (referred to in this Act as the "Secretary") shall strike a gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

(c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the gold medal referred to in subsection (a) in honor of Merrill's Marauders, the gold medal shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where it shall be displayed as appropriate and made available for research.

(2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should make the gold medal received under paragraph (1) available for display elsewhere, particularly at other locations and events associated with Merrill's Marauders.

SEC. 4. DUPLICATE MEDALS.

Under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck under section 3, at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

SEC. 5. STATUS OF MEDALS.

Medals struck pursuant to this Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2019

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 3 p.m., Monday, December 9; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; further, that following leader

remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Bumatay nomination; and finally, that the cloture motions filed during today's session ripen at 5:30 p.m. on Monday.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2019, AT 3 P.M.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 3:57 p.m., adjourned until Monday, December 9, 2019, at 3 p.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate December 5, 2019:

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

ROBERT M. DUNCAN, OF KENTUCKY, TO BE A GOVERNOR OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE FOR A TERM EXPIRING DECEMBER 8, 2025.

THE JUDICIARY

RICHARD ERNEST MYERS II, OF NORTH CAROLINA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA.

SHERRI A. LYDON, OF SOUTH CAROLINA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA.