

of the committee unanimously and was approved by the Senate unanimously, and we have been negotiating with Chairman TAKANO and Ranking Member ROE of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for its passage by the House and with consideration by the Senate of other bills that the House has and will send us.

I want to thank my colleague Senator TESTER, the ranking member of our committee, Chairman TAKANO, and Dr. ROE, the ranking member of the House committee, for working expeditiously with me to reach an agreement to pass this comprehensive mental health and suicide prevention bill for America's veterans.

One veteran lost due to suicide is one too many, and it is a national tragedy that we continue to lose 20 veterans each day to suicide.

I am glad that Congress has come together to do our part to ensure this bill which will save lives. It needs to be passed without delay and signed into law.

This bill will establish a grant program and require the VA to better collaborate with community organizations across the country already serving veterans. This provision was specifically championed by my colleague Senator BOOZMAN of Arkansas.

In addition, this legislation directs the VA to embark on groundbreaking research in the form of a precision medicine initiative that will improve how mental health conditions are diagnosed and treated, expand VA telehealth capabilities to better serve rural and Tribal veterans, bolster and expedite Federal research capabilities, increase accountability over the Department's mental health and suicide prevention programs, and make necessary improvements to the VA mental health workforce.

While this legislation puts in place the critical care, services, and support that will save veterans' lives, it is my hope that the bill will also serve as a signal to our veterans, servicemembers, and their families that they are never, never alone.

I want to extend my gratitude to the President for his support of this bill, and I ask him to sign this legislation as soon as it arrives on his desk.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, we must take our duty to America's veterans seriously, which is why the circumstances we find ourselves in today are extremely unfortunate. The extensions for important VA programs for the upcoming fiscal year—just 8 days away—are currently being held up from being considered and passed in the Senate.

This extension bill was negotiated in earnest and the four corners of the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees agreed upon this legislation. This was a collaborative effort, not a partisan one, but, nonetheless,

this bill has not yet been cleared by the Senate minority.

Let me be clear: Countless veterans rely on these programs. Let me be clear: They expire at the end of the month.

From raising veterans out of homelessness to making certain that COVID-19 doesn't disrupt a veteran's pursuit of higher education, to helping rural veterans get their medical appointments, the fiscal year 2021 VA extenders bill contains a wide variety of extensions for programs that support a multitude of veteran populations.

Additionally, we have requested consent for several House-passed bills that will improve mental health care for veterans and increase annual veteran benefit rates to keep up with inflation. These are commonsense ideas that have broad support and will make meaningful differences in the lives of our veterans. These are items that would normally pass the Senate without difficulty.

Our veterans should not wait and should not need to wait. They can't afford to wait for the Senate to act on these matters. The deadline is quickly approaching. Our Nation's veterans did not serve their country for partisan reasons, and we must not let any partisan differences prevent us from authorizing the programs to support those veterans.

I ask my Senate colleagues to fulfill our collective duty regarding veterans programs and that we do not allow other issues to distract from that duty.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

REMEMBERING JUSTICE RUTH BADER GINSBURG

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, this past weekend, we lost a brave and uncommonly fearless American.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg represented many things to many people. For some, her work was the gold standard of legal advocacy. For others, her arguments proved to be intellectual flashpoints, sparking opportunities to think critically about what we believe and why we believe it. But for each and every one of us, she served as living proof that the status quo is often much more fragile than it appears.

So today, I think I speak for so many Tennesseans when I say we are thankful beyond measure for that enduring legacy and the standard that she set as she broke barriers and crashed through glass ceilings, opening opportunities for women. I hope that I am as effective as she in increasing opportunities for women each and every day.

AMERICAN UNITY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, last week marked another Constitution Day celebration. It could not have come at a better time because, for

just one little moment, it helped us pause and contemplate two very important things.

First, we took time to think about those values that our Founders knew. They knew that these values were essential to the establishment of a model republic.

Second, we remembered the progress we have made in deciding for ourselves how the passage of time changes or does not change what we can do to make that "more perfect Union" even more so.

Free speech, petition, and protest, the right to defend ourselves, the right to cast a vote—these are the freedoms that unite us in times of turmoil, whether we find ourselves in the midst of all-out war or just a particularly contentious election year.

I would argue that how a nation reacts to that turmoil says more about its foundation than it does about who controls the news cycle on any given day.

Divisive voices are hard at work in this country, and they are doing their very best to convince our friends, families, and neighbors that our foundation is weak and that our founding principles are no longer good enough. I find that very sad.

They want us to believe that America as we know it is suddenly irredeemable, that it just can't be safe.

You might ask yourself: Why are they saying all of this in spite of hundreds of years and millions of Americans proving the exact opposite is true?

Here is what I think. They say it because they want us to give up. They want our neighbors, our families, and our friends to give up, call it quits; our best days are behind us. We have all heard them say this. They say: Throw the Constitution in the trash. Rewrite it. Start over. And after you throw the Constitution in the trash, then let's reimagine the world's greatest democracy through our very own destructive lenses of socialism, critical theory, and political correctness. That is what they say.

As I am sure we have all seen, they have come up with some fairly persuasive methods to try to get their way. But I believe that, in the end, these efforts will all be in vain because when push comes to shove, we, the American people, always manage to remember where we have come from and to remember who we are.

It is interesting. I think somehow we Americans always find our way home, back to those first principles. Indeed, I pray that continues.

Our Founders saw what tyranny really looked like. They saw it up close and personal because they had to live through it. They knew exactly—exactly—what would happen if they put the fate of the Republic in the hands of men alone. So what did they do to give that insurance policy, if you will, that democracy and a democratic republic would continue and would stand? They drafted a Constitution, recognizing