the Organization of American States, as appropriate, shall seek to ensure that expenses related to the procedures set forth in this Act do not increase member quotas, assessed fees, or voluntary contributions and that the Secretariat of the OAS shall seek to ensure shared financial responsibilities among the member states in facilitating the financial support necessary to carry out this initiative.

SEC. 5. SUPPORT FOR OAS HUMAN RIGHTS AND ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVES.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the efforts of the OAS Secretary General and Secretariat to combat corruption and impunity in the Americas represent important contributions to strengthening the rule of law and democratic governance in the Americas; and

(2) the United States should support efforts to ensure the effectiveness and independence of OAS initiatives to combat corruption and impunity in the Americas.

(b) ANTI-CORRUPTION AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION STRATEGY.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Act, the Secretary of State shall submit to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives a strategy for supporting OAS anti-corruption and human rights promotion efforts. The strategy should include—

(1) an assessment of United States programs, activities, and initiatives with the OAS to support anti-corruption and human rights promotion in the Americas;

(2) a summary of the steps taken by the United States Mission to the OAS to strengthen anti-corruption and anti-impunity efforts in the Americas;

(3) an assessment of necessary reforms and initiatives to prioritize and reinforce the OAS Secretary General and Secretariat's efforts to advance human rights and combat corruption and impunity in the Americas;

(4) a detailed plan to facilitate increased OAS collaboration, as appropriate, with relevant stakeholders, including elected national legislators and civil society, in support of an approach to promote human rights and combat transnational criminal activities, corruption, and impunity in the Americas; and

(5) a detailed plan for implementing the strategy set forth in this section of the Act.

SEC. 6. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on OAS processes, initiatives, and reforms undertaken to implement section 4, actions taken to implement the strategy required under section 5(b), and steps taken to implement the Organization of American States Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013 (Public Law 113–41). The report should include—

(1) an analysis of the progress made by the OAS to adopt and effectively implement reforms and initiatives to advance human rights and combat corruption and impunity in the Americas; and

(2) a detailed assessment of OAS efforts to increase stakeholder engagement to advance human rights and combat corruption and impunity in the Americas.

(b) BRIEFINGS.—Not later than one year after the Secretary of State submits the report required under subsection (a), and annually thereafter for two additional years, the Secretary shall provide to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives a briefing on the information required to be included in such report.

SEC. 7. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON ELECTED NATIONAL LEGISLATOR.

It is the sense of Congress that an elected national legislator participating in the activities outlined in this Act should be an individual that—

(1) was elected as a result of periodic, free and fair elections; and

(2) is not known to be under investigation or convicted for corruption or transnational criminal activities, including trafficking of people, goods, or illicit narcotics, money-laundering, terrorist financing, acts of terrorism, campaign finance violations, bribery, or extortion.

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

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the bill, as amended.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 1310), as amended, was passed.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon table.

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021—CONFERENCE REPORT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I see that my colleague and classmate is here on the floor. I got to hear his speech earlier today, and it was one of the best speeches that he has given and the best instruction that all of us should listen to.

He has far more experience than just the time that he was a classmate with me, because he served in the House as well. He is Mr. Agriculture and has solved a lot of problems in those areas, and it has been a pleasure to be here with him. And I leave with him. He has done an outstanding job.

We also like some of the same literature.

THE BUDGET

Mr. President, it has been an honor to serve as the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee for the past 6 years. There is no question that these have been challenging times. They have culminated in the current pandemic that we continue to confront. Throughout all of these challenges, I am proud to say that the committee has played a key role in working to address the fiscal challenges facing our Nation. We put in place policies that helped grow our economy and improve the congressional budget process.

Now I need to make a clarification for anybody who might be listening. The Budget Committee is not the spending committee. That is the Appropriations Committee. The Budget Committee does a roadmap that is supposed to provide some discipline for the people doing the spending. That is where we need to do a lot more work.

I want to start off by telling you a little budget story. My youngest daughter and her family are strict budgeters. They follow Dave Ramsey's principles, and the whole family participates in monthly allocation of their resources. It has made a huge difference in their ability to pay off things and to enjoy life.

A year ago, my older daughter picked up my granddaughters from their after-school activities and said: How would you like to go to McDonald's for dinner? Of course, they were thrilled.

My daughter said: Well, maybe we ought to call your parents and see if they would like it too.

At this point the older daughter, who I think was 11 at the time, said: Who is paying?

And she said: I am.

She said: Oh, OK, because we have already used our eating-out budget.

That is family participation in budgeting.

As a result, I also have the youngest granddaughter, who saved up for an Apple watch. Do you know how much restraint of spending that is so you can reach the goal that you want and buy what you really need? That is good budgeting.

We can do good budgeting, but we have to have good appropriations to follow it up too.

The committee has had some real successes over the past 6 years.

We passed four budgets, including the first balanced 10-year blueprint approved by Congress since 2001.

We also played a key role in helping pass the most sweeping update of our Nation's tax system in more than 30 years. The passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act started with the approval of the FY 2018 Senate Budget Resolution. That resolution started the process to construct legislation that reduced tax rates for millions of Americans and modernized our antiquated Tax Code. It also supported responsible energy development that will keep energy affordable and provide a long-term supply for American energy.

Oversight was also a critical part of the committee's work. During my time as chairman, we worked to ensure the Federal Government was accountable to the public by boosting transparency, by improving Federal financial management, by identifying duplication of Federal programs, and by approving Federal information technology.

Increasing the transparency of our congressional budget process has also been a major priority. After becoming chairman, I restarted the practice of publicly releasing regular scorekeeping reports—which we publish on our committee website—that show how we spent the money. More recently, we developed information on the budgetary effects of the various COVID–19 bills. We can get those online.

Providing information like this on an ongoing basis is one more tool for committees and taxpayers alike to see how the current law stacks up against the budget we are required to adhere to. Scorekeeping reports operate just like regular checkups with the dentist or doctor to help identify risks and find solutions before more serious problems emerge.

In 2015, we also began regular public oversight hearings with the Congressional Budget Office. This was the first CBO oversight hearing in more than 30 years. Because of our efforts, CBO now regularly publicly releases information, tracking its forecasting records, the accuracy of estimates and projections, and the data it uses in its work.

While we have had some successes, there are still many serious challenges facing our Nation. Even before coronavirus came to our shores, our country was moving down an unsustainable fiscal path. The pandemic has only accelerated this, with Congress approving COVID relief legislation that would add more than $2.6 trillion to our debt so far. In the near-term this spending, necessary as it may have been, translated into an overall deficit of $3.1 trillion in fiscal year 2020, more than triple the amount recorded the previous fiscal year. CBO's most recent ''Long-Term Budget Outlook'' paints an even more dire picture of deficits and debt rising to unprecedented levels if current laws remain unchanged—and this represents the best-case scenario.

For decades, CBO, the Government Accountability Office, economists, and Members of Congress have been raising the alarm that if we continued on this course, our debt would explode with potentially devastating economic consequences, leaving us unable to fulfill the promises of the past. That day always seemed a long time away. But time waits for no one, and tomorrow is fast arriving.

By 2023, barely 2 years away, CBO projects that debt as a percentage of GDP will reach an all-time high of 107 percent. By 2050, debt could reach 195 percent of gross domestic product—which is the amount of actual production we do in the United States—and the annual deficit would reach 12.6 percent of GDP. That is where the tax money comes from.

Spending as a percent of GDP will rise 31.2 percent by 2050, primarily due to—this is very important—due to rising Social Security, healthcare costs, and net interest spending.

CBO projects that net interest spending will exceed all discretionary spending in 2043 and will exceed Social Security by 2046. By 2050, spending on interest will be larger than any single program. That is the interest on the debt. That doesn't pay down any debt. That is just the interest on the debt. By 2050, it will be the single largest program.

Now, that is assuming we continue with the extremely low interest rates that we get now. We are not even close to the national average. We are way below the national average. The national average would be 5 percent. If that were to happen, the only thing we would be able to fund would be interest on the national debt. You didn't hear me mention Social Security or Medicare or education or military or any of those things. That is why I have been mentioning this so often. Interest will eat us alive.

The amazing part of everything I just said is that this is the rosy scenario. Increases in spending or interest rates that are higher than the low rates assumed by CBO means that the outcomes are more severe than currently recorded. CBO expects rising deficits will have major negative economic consequences, including lower investment and output and a greater chance of a fiscal crisis. CBO notes that high and rising debt would also constrain policymakers' ability to borrow in response to future unforeseen emergencies, leaving the United States vulnerable in the face of potential disasters while also risking our national security.

CBO is the Congressional Budget Office, and it is a nonpartisan office that helps to make these evaluations. As I mentioned earlier, we are actually holding them accountable by having them come in and explain what they projected and how it matches up with what actually happens. So we should pay attention to them. I actually think that they come up with fairly low numbers.

I don't want to leave this body with nothing but doom and gloom. It is not too late to turn things around. We can be successful if we work together.

Contrary to what most people believe about Congress and what is reported in the media, I know both parties can work together. I have seen it firsthand as a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and my work with Senator Ted Kennedy and, again, here on the Senate Budget Committee and my work with Senators WHITEHOUSE, KAINE, WARNER, KING, VAN HOLLEN, and others.

Bipartisanship will be key as Congress works to tackle our fiscal challenges. Instilling the Federal budget process with regular action and predictability, active legislative oversight and spending transparency—that is all critical to strengthening our democracy and reducing our Nation's unsustainable spending and debt.

Since taking the helm of the Committee, we have held more than a dozen hearings on the topic of budget process reform, soliciting expert testimony from a variety of sources, including economists, academics, State and local leaders, former chairs of the Budget Committee, and even people from other countries. This has been one of my top priorities as chairman, and we have had some early successes in this effort.

This includes the committee's unanimous bipartisan approval of new budget rules that included budget process reforms, which have led to more orderly, meaningful, and transparent consideration of the budget resolutions in the committee. We followed those hearings by introducing and passing legislation, the Bipartisan Congressional Budget Reform Act, which represented the first bipartisan budget reform approved by the Senate Budget Committee since 1990.

I want to repeat that. In a bipartisan way, we passed a Congressional Budget Reform Act, and it represented the first bipartisan reforms approved by the Senate Budget Committee since 1990. A key focus of budget process reform is to make congressional budgets easier to pass and harder to ignore, while encouraging regular order in the normal funding process. If budgets are going to be a useful governing tool, they must matter. Budgets are the foundation by which we govern, the way we establish what matters most to our Nation, and where we agree limited resources should be focused.

We have seen time and again that when budgets are treated as an afterthought or as a wish list, our ability to legislate effectively and fulfill our most basic constitutional duties is made more difficult, if not impossible.

To restore budgets to their proper role, they must be enforceable, and they should increase fiscal accountability in Congress. If lawmakers approve a budget, they should stick to it. To that end, my bipartisan budget process reform legislation would make a number of important reforms, including creating a new enforcement tool that could be used only for reducing the deficit. I realize that we may not get this bill across the finish line before I complete my service, but I hope others will take up the effort and ensure the key parts, including fiscal accountability, are included in future reforms. I have had the assurance from both Members on this side of the aisle and the other side of the aisle that that is a possibility and a priority.

Next year, lawmakers will be confronted with the construction of a new budget and spending bills, and for the first time in almost a decade, it will be without spending caps. We have had some self-imposed limits on our spending before called spending caps, and it has been very irritating to people who want to spend money. But now they can do that because this will be the first time in almost a decade without the spending caps contained in the Budget Control Act.

Of course, even under the Budget Control Act, Congress regularly ignored the fiscal limits it contained, but starting next year, there will be no budget caps to guide overall funding levels or to curb Federal discretionary spending—no limits. This could be and should be a cause for great concern, but it is also a chance for us to work together to find a way to begin the process to address our fiscal challenges.

Of course, I mentioned that that is just curbing the Federal discretionary

spending. That is the little dab of money that the appropriators actually get to make a decision on, and 70 percent of what we do is already passed without a single vote from this body. And that number—we keep trying to shift discretionary things over to mandatory so people can be assured that the money will be spent, but seldom do we ever put any money with the new mandatory item.

But beyond the annual funding fight, our country faces an even more daunting fiscal crisis: the rapidly approaching depletion of several Federal trust funds. That includes the Highway Trust Fund next year. It also includes Medicare's Hospital Insurance Trust Fund. We have 4 years on that, 2024. There is the Disability Insurance Trust Fund, 2026, and the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund, 2031. Those are trust funds that are approaching depletion, running out of money.

OK. In the CBO's latest baseline, total scheduled spending for all pending trust fund programs will exceed their dedicated revenues by $12.3 trillion over the next 10 years. This accounts for the majority of the $13 trillion in cumulative deficits CBO projects the Nation will run over this period—depletion of the trust funds.

What happens when these trust funds run dry? Current law requires their spending to automatically be reduced to match their income. This means real cuts to crucial programs. I mentioned Social Security. It would have to go down to the amount of money that we actually receive going out to recipients of Social Security. That could be a big and immediate hurt.

So, again, a real challenge awaits next Congress as my tenure comes to a close. I am proud of what the Senate Budget Committee accomplished. We helped to improve the fiscal health of millions of Americans by passing the most comprehensive tax reform in a generation. We have also committed ourselves to working to improve the congressional budget process so Washington and Congress can get a better handle on what we are spending and where it is going, including a new tool that could be used only for reducing the deficit. We have worked to boost fiscal transparency, improve Federal financial management, identify duplication of Federal programs, and improve Federal information technology. But there is much more that needs to be done, and now those challenges will be passed to the next chairman.

While I have highlighted the problems, I am also leaving a roadmap with possible paths forward. I would ask all of my colleagues to work closely together to address these issues, as we can no longer push them off for someone else to fix later. We need to find the common ground. Tomorrow is here, and we have to start making those choices not only for ourselves but for our kids and our grandkids and our country.

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.

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

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

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to remind all of my colleagues about the urgent, urgent need to pass coronavirus legislation. People need help, and they need it right now.

I am glad that bipartisan discussions are continuing. I think it is very positive, and I know that many of us are involved in those negotiations. I commend all of my colleagues who are working very hard to get this done.

It is critical that we come to an agreement that will help families and that will help businesses and communities get through this rough time, but time is running out, as we know. Our Nation is facing a crisis. Our States and local governments are facing a crisis as they are trying to gear up for an effective and rapid distribution of vaccines. Our local police officers, firefighters, public health workers, and other essential workers face layoffs.

The only real possibility that I see of defunding the police is the unwillingness, so far, by the majority leader to support funding local law enforcement in the COVID–19 emergency package that we are trying to get done. We all know that businesses and workers and families are facing a crisis.

We simply can't wrap up this session, we can't end this session and go home without responding to the urgent needs of the American people.

It has now been 1 week since the last time I was on the floor speaking about the need for more help. In the past week, more than 1 million additional people in the United States have become infected, and an additional 13,000 people in the United States have died because of COVID–19—13,000 moms and dads, grandpas and grandmas and friends and neighbors. We have now seen nearly 290,000 of our family members and friends and neighbors die of this horrible disease. That is like if the entire population of Grand Rapids and Flint, MI, simply disappeared.

Meanwhile, millions of families at risk of eviction are 1 week closer to finding themselves without a home in the winter in the middle of a health pandemic. Millions of small business owners have spent 1 more week scrambling to keep their workers on the payroll. Families don't have enough to eat, and they have spent 1 more week wondering where their next meal is going to come from for themselves and for their children.

A week is a long time to wait when you are in danger of being homeless or losing your job or being hungry or watching your child who is hungry. We are running out of time. We are running out of time, and so many American businesses, workers, and families are running out of time.

On December 26, only 16 days from now—16 days from now, the day after Christmas—vital unemployment programs will end, cutting off benefits that millions of workers need to provide for their families. Somebody who is self-employed, a contract worker, a gig worker, they will receive zero help after that to feed their families and put a roof over their head and pay the bills through this pandemic.

Five days after that, on December 31, the Federal Reserves' emergency lending program ends. That will cut off crucial credit that is keeping businesses open and helping State and local governments provide necessary services. Also on December 31, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's eviction moratorium ends, putting more people on the street. The Federal foreclosure moratorium and some opportunities for forbearance expire.

It is cold in Michigan right now, and it is going to get colder. Imagine how frightening it would be to know that your family is losing their home in the middle of a pandemic in the middle of the winter.

The truth is, our Nation is not facing just a health crisis; we are facing an economic crisis; we are facing a housing crisis; we are facing a hunger crisis all at the same time.

These expiring programs have been a lifeline for families, for communities, and for businesses during the pandemic. That lifeline is now fraying, and a lack of action here in Washington could cause it to completely snap.

There is a lot of talk about numbers right now, and numbers are important, but much more important are the people who need help. They are not numbers. I am thinking of a Michigan mom of two growing boys who has been waiting hours in a line of cars, week after week, to bring home a box of food. I am thinking of a Michigan dad who has been looking so hard for a new job, but nobody wants to be hiring right now, and his unemployment help is almost out. I am thinking of the owner of a Michigan business who had no choice but to lay off half of their workers right before the holidays. I am thinking of a Michigan retiree who is behind on her rent. She could move in with her daughter's family, but their home is already crowded, and she doesn't want to be a burden, and we are in the middle of a pandemic where we are telling people to socially distance to be safe.

While we are debating, people are suffering and panicking because they are not sure what they are going to do. People can't wait another week, and we cannot either.

This is the United States of America. It is not like we don't have the capacity to fix this right now. It is all about political will. It is about, do we get it? Do we care about people? Do we understand what is happening to people? And

are we willing to support the bipartisan effort going on right now that can do something—at least provide a bridge for a few months, through the winter months, into the new year?

There is an opportunity going on. There is a lot of hard work going on. There is no excuse not to take this moment and to come together and provide help in what is a COVID survival package for people in Michigan and across the country. That is what this is.

We are at a moment where it is up to us to make sure that we get this done, and if not, we should not end this session until we do.

Thank you.

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

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

REMEMBERING JOE MORGAN

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, Arkansas is known as the Natural State, and few have been more dedicated to preserving Arkansas in all of its natural beauty than was Joe Morgan.

Joe passed away last month at the age of 76. Joe was a lifelong Arkansan. He studied at Little Rock University—now the University of Arkansas-Little Rock—and he worked for many years as a car dealer for great American companies like General Motors and Chevrolet. He also served on the Arkansas Motor Vehicle Commission.

But Joe will probably be remembered most for his tireless advocacy on behalf of Arkansas' natural heritage and environment. Governor Hutchinson appointed Joe to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, where he quickly established himself as a champion for Arkansas duck hunters and the wilderness upon which they rely.

Joe hunted and fished in Stuttgart, the duck capital of the world. As a member of the commission, he made it his mission to ensure duck hunting remained a gentleman's sport and to preserve the hunting grounds he knew and loved so they would be available to future generations of Arkansans.

He was especially passionate about preserving Bayou Meto Waterfowl Management Area, one of the crown jewels of duck hunting in Arkansas.

He was instrumental in implementing safe boating regulations to protect hunters and waterfowl populations alike. He imposed time limits on when boats could be out on the water to preserve the health and sustainability of the duck population.

Joe's first priority was always to his fellow Arkansans. He pressed for limits on when nonresidents could hunt to ensure that locals were never pushed out of the hunting spots they grew up with.

Joe's fellow commissioners will remember him as a dogged defender of hunting and fishing in Arkansas. His wife of 56 years, Judy, and his son, Brett, will remember him as a loving husband and father who was always ready with a joke—and always ready for a good shoot, a round of golf, or even a jaunt in his trusty Cessna 182.

As for me, I will remember Joe as a friend. I met Joe in my early campaigns, and we became fast friends. We talked and texted often. He even hosted me, with friends, in North Carolina to speak about Republican politics.

Joe Morgan may have left us, but he left his heart in Arkansas—in the well-stocked, flooded timber of Bayou Meto, which he helped to preserve.

In a fitting tribute to his legacy, Joe passed away on the opening day for duck hunting in Arkansas. Every hunter who enjoys Arkansas' natural beauty this season and every season in the future can thank Joe for the experience.

May he rest in peace.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1877

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, 71 days in the fiscal year, 71 days into a continuing resolution. It is unfortunate. I am placing no blame.

It is unfortunate we have not considered on the floor of the U.S. Senate—not 1 of the 12 regular order appropriations bills. The appropriations process is completely broken. Quite honestly, it has been broken since I arrived here in the Senate in 2011.

I ran for the U.S. Senate primarily because I was concerned about the fact that we were mortgaging our children's future. Back then, we were $14 trillion in debt, and that was extremely concerning to me. Now, 10 years later, 71 days into the 2021 fiscal year, we are $27.4 trillion into debt. That is an increase of $13.4 trillion. It is almost double since I have been here in just 10 years.

Again, the appropriations process is so broken. During that timeframe, we had to pass 36 continuing resolutions. The debt limit has no power in terms of controlling our out-of-control spending. We either raised or suspended the debt limit nine times.

Unfortunately, during that time, that 10 years, we have also—because of the broken process here—we have shut down the government three times, costing our economy, costing our government billions of dollars, and hurting real people.

I come from the State of Wisconsin, where, if the legislature can't get its act together and we don't pass appropriations bills and we are at an impasse, we don't shut down the government. We don't even shut down a particular agency. What we do is we do something that is pretty practical, the type of commonsense legislation that Wisconsinites would embrace. We just appropriate. We just fund the agencies or the entire State government at the previous year's level.

Doesn't that make sense? I think it makes all the sense in the world.

Again, here we are, 71 days into the fiscal year, and we haven't passed an appropriations bill. We have to pass, within the next 24 hours or so, our 37th continuing resolution to kick the can another week so we can get our act together and pass some kind of massive omnibus that nobody is going to be able to read before they actually vote for it. It is a completely broken process.

I recognize that as chairman of Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, a certain part of this government shutdown—this broken process—some of these elements weren't in my committee's jurisdiction. We had a number of pieces of legislation; one by Senator PORTMAN; one by Senator PAUL; one by Senator LANKFORD, who had been working on a similar piece of legislation from being in the House, to end government shutdowns forever.

As chairman of the committee, I had to take a look at these pieces of legislation and decide which one did I want to bring up to my committee, pass out of my committee, and bring to the floor of the Senate.

I chose Senator LANKFORD's because he had done a lot of hard work with Senator MAGGIE HASSAN on a bipartisan bill. Again, it is very simple. It didn't automatically increase spending, didn't automatically decrease spending. It did exactly what we do in Wisconsin.

If we don't get our act together, and we don't pass any appropriations bills or a single or two appropriations bills, we don't shut down the government. We don't shut down that agency. We just appropriate enough funds at last year's level, and we continue until we actually do pass an appropriations bill.

I know the members of the Appropriations Committee and have all the respect in the world for the chairman and the ranking member. I know they don't like CRs, but, again, this will be our 37th CR since I have been here for 10 years. It is broken.

But just in case they are concerned about these CRs, what I can give you is Wisconsin's history in this. Since we passed this commonsense reform, really, the longest CR we ever had in Wisconsin since we had this anti-government shutdown process was just 4 months in 1971. That is a long time ago, and it was only 4 months. We are approaching 4 months now.

Again, this is the 37th CR since I took office. We passed out of my committee—there were only two dissenting votes, two ''no'' votes. Those came

from two Senators who just had an alternate version of the End Government Shutdowns Act. We passed this out of my committee 12 to 2.

We have been working now for the last year trying to find some vehicle to add it on as an amendment to end this insanity.

We thought that with the group of us here, this would be a good time. It is a very simple bill. Again, if you don't pass an appropriations bill or all the appropriation bills, you just fund, you appropriate at last year's level. But we have a few little disciplines to force the Senators in Congress to do their job.

The first discipline is, we don't allow any Federal or campaign moneys to be spent on travel, which, basically, forces Members of Congress to stay here until we do get our act together, until we do pass appropriations bills and fund government that is necessary.

The other thing we do is we only allow Congress, each Chamber, to only bring up appropriations bills in their Chamber. There is an exception, of course, for any bill that would have to do with an immediate national security emergency. That is pretty much it.

In committee, Senator SCOTT had an amendment, which I will turn to him to have him describe the final discipline to force Members of Congress to do their jobs: pass appropriations bills and fund government without shutting the government down.

Senator SCOTT.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. First, I want to thank the chairman for his effort to try to figure out how we can stop shutting down the government.

When I came up here with Senator BRAUN 2 years ago, we were in a government shutdown, and nobody wins. It doesn't work for any part of government when government gets shut down. I know, talking to the appropriations chair and ranking member, that they are also focused on making sure of what we can do to make sure we pass budgets, pass our spending bills, and not shut down the government.

I want to fight the way Washington has been working. I want to make sure it works for all Florida families, not just career politicians.

I have a background in business like Chairman JOHNSON does. In the real world, if you don't do your job, you don't get paid. It is really simple. If Congress can't accomplish its most basic task—which I believe is passing a budget, appropriations bills, in an orderly fashion—then why should we get paychecks? I think it is pretty simple.

When you listen to what Chairman JOHNSON just said; that the current system in Washington is clearly broken, there is no—a lot of people care about this, but there is no one, ultimately, who has responsibility and there are no consequences and it costs our system a lot of money. Congress doesn't pass a budget. Instead, they just pass temporary measures, and it kicks the can down the road.

The thing that has been surprising to me since I got up here is how little of the budget we actually review every year. It is surprising to me that about 70 percent of the budget we don't even look at every year. I think all these things are unacceptable. Congress can't continue to just get away with not doing its basic job and creating a burden.

We have to do something different. That is why I am proud to join my colleagues today to pass the Prevent Government Shutdowns Act, which includes my no budget, no pay proposal.

Withholding paychecks from Members of Congress who fail to pass a budget will help prevent government shutdowns, which hurt the economy, hurt millions of people.

It is also an important step to promote fiscal responsibility in the face of what Senator JOHNSON said: $27.4 trillion worth of debt. I believe we need to pass the No Budget, No Pay Act now to show we are serious about getting this spending under control and we are serious about the future of this Nation.

Members of Congress make significantly more than the average American makes. We make $174,000 a year, and we are asking them to do the most basic function: pass a budget. It is not complicated. I think every Member of Congress—rich or poor—can agree Congress should pass a budget every year. There is absolutely no reason we can't. Anyone who disagrees should not have this job.

Let's go back. When the American people don't do their job, there are consequences. It is time we make Washington work a little bit like what the real world looks like. Let's pass the Prevent Government Shutdowns Act and get the No Budget, No Pay Act done.

I refer to my colleague from Indiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, Rick mentioned that back in 2018, we ran on what we are talking about today. We wouldn't be honest to the people who elected us to come here.

I had eight pages of prepared remarks. This is something I have talked about so often. I am going to cover some new terrain to make it relatable to the citizens across this country about how this place works and how it is so different from how anything else works.

A few of us come from the world of accountability—the business world—where you don't have the luxury of doing what we do here in the Federal Government. Listen to this closely because this is what most citizens don't understand. We are given the revenues here in this place, and our only job, No. 1, should be not to spend more than what we are given. We don't do that.

We borrow 23 percent, roughly, of what we spend. Try taking that to your banker, running a business, see if you can get a loan doing that. That is just a real simple way to look at how we do this year after year.

On Main Street, whether you are running a business, whether it is your household—I served in State government for 3 years. We were smart enough to have a balanced budget amendment. We believed in things like a rainy day fund. It was in our DNA. We didn't have to think about it; that in the long run, you are not going to succeed if you spend more than what you take in.

Coming out of World War II was the highest level of national debt we ever had—roughly, where we are now. That generation, we know what they went through. They were savers. They were investors and not only in government. We are now spenders and consumers.

You would think that in the biggest business in the world—we spend about $4.5 trillion a year. We take in maybe about $3.5. Of course, in a year like this, where you had a pandemic, add another $3 trillion or so to the national debt. And structurally, we will be marching, over the next 5 to 7 years, to where that goes to $1.5 trillion a year. Start adding all that up.

Here is what is going to happen. When we are in a position like we are now, where you can borrow money for nearly nothing—we are the only reserve currency in the world that allows us to do it—that doesn't mean you should do it because we are piling up obligations on our kids and our grandkids, and we might as well admit it. How have we evolved to get to where we are now? I don't think that is as much an issue as we know where we are now. It is not sustainable.

Here is what is going to happen to the most important programs we have and that everybody likes: Social Security, Medicare. Medicare has been around since the mid-1960s. All of us have been paying into it, employers and employees. Every penny will be exhausted out of the trust fund, and that was about 5 to 5½ years. Now it has advanced, due to our current financial situation, to maybe 4 or 5. What happens? This will be the first reality, the shock that comes to the American public—especially elderly who depend on Medicare for their healthcare—18 percent across-the-board cuts. Think of the static and the uproar we will hear then.

We can stop it if we just have a little discipline. That is mostly about embracing something like I put forward, the Fair Care Act, which is the most comprehensive, aggressive with healthcare costs in this country.

As a CEO from Main Street, and CEOs across the country, small business owners, the biggest problem we deal with is the high cost of healthcare. Of course, we here protect a healthcare industry that is broken. And you have another side that wants to get more government involved. And, really, all it takes there is to have

transparency and competition—have a consumer who is engaged in his or her own well-being, and you would have prices cascade down.

Those are tough decisions. You take on three of the four biggest lobbies in the country—pharma, hospitals, and insurance. That is another thing that doesn't make this place work. With Social Security, we have some time there, but that was crafted back when life spans were a lot shorter than what they are now. We knew that actuarially, and it has been coming at us for years. We have until, maybe, 2032 or 2033. We have been paying into that since the Great Depression, but every penny out of the trust fund will be gone. I think you get the picture.

When I came here—as did Senator JOHNSON from Wisconsin, Senator SCOTT from Florida, and a few fiscal conservatives, like Senator LEE and a few others who will weigh in on this—I talked about what was uncomfortable. Well, to me, we have had all of this time, and we have not done anything about it. We have the perfect opportunity. We know we are in this current dynamic, and we know we will have to get through it, but what we are here to do today is to get a vote on a simple bill that says, do not shut the government down when we are trying to get through these issues.

Put a little bit of rigor and discipline into the process with the No Budget, No Pay Act, and then, maybe, we can get to the point at which we give the American public a better product. Imagine if everything were given to you in terms of your revenues. First of all, don't spend more than what you take in. When you have a year to do something, start on day one. That is the way it works in the real world, and that is the way it works in a household. That is the way it worked on a school board on which I served for 10 years, and that is the way it works in a place like Indiana, which balances its budget every year, has a rainy day fund, and lives responsibly.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, article I, section 9, clause 7 of the Constitution makes clear that no money will be drawn from the Treasury except by an appropriation passed by Congress. Article I, section 7 of the Constitution likewise makes clear that you can't pass an appropriation or any other form of legislation without the same document, the same bill, the same proposal passing the House of Representatives and passing the Senate and then being submitted to the President for signature, veto, or acquiescence.

Over time, particularly in the last decade, it has become increasingly common for Congress to recognize the cumbersome nature of that process, which is cumbersome by design. It is sometimes easier to just circumvent the process, technically complying with its commands but doing so in a way that doesn't really invite or even allow for individual Members or their constituents to know what they are voting for when they vote on a spending bill. This is what we have come to refer to as governing by cliff in the spending context, and it has, sadly, become the status quo in Washington. It often provides Members with a simple binary choice when they are facing a spending bill.

When you come up against a spending cliff, it means a deadline, almost always one arbitrarily imposed by the previous spending bill. It is when you come up close to that and there is no spending bill on the floor until, maybe, a day or two or sometimes an hour or two or sometimes more like a minute or two. It is something that has been negotiated behind closed doors by only a small handful of Members of Congress, excluding everyone else in the House, everyone else in the Senate, and the hundreds of millions of people they collectively represent.

Sometimes that kind of legislation is brought forward—not just sometimes. Basically, it is every time. As my friend and colleague the Senator from Wisconsin noted a minute ago, I think this will mark the 37th consecutive time that Congress has passed something like this or it is, at least, the 37th time that Congress has passed something like this since Senator JOHNSON and I came to the Senate and were sworn into office in 2011.

The problem with this is that Members can't reasonably know what they are voting on in advance, and then they are given the simple binary choice to take it or leave it. You won't have any opportunity to amend it. You really won't even have the opportunity to read it or understand it, much less communicate its contents to your constituents, who will have to pay for it. You can vote for that in its entirety or you can vote against it, but if you vote against it and it doesn't pass, you will be blamed singlehandedly for shutting down the government regardless of whether you would have preferred to have brought up and, in fact, had tried for a long period of time to bring up spending bills prior to that last possible moment. This puts the American people and their elected lawmakers in the House and the Senate in an untenable position, one that I would analogize to a circumstance of an individual who lives in an outlying area.

Let's suppose that you move to an outlying area, one that is distant from any other town. Let's suppose that, on your first day of work after moving to that town, you are about to leave home, and you speak to your significant other on the phone, who informs you: Bring home bread, milk, and eggs when you stop by the store. Make sure you get those on your way home. Don't come home without them.

So you go to this grocery store in this outlying area that is distant from any other town. It is the only store in town. It is the only store, in fact, for hours in any direction. You go to the store, and you get your cart. You put in your bread. You get the milk, and you put in the eggs. Then you get to the checkout counter.

The checkout person says: OK. This is how much the eggs cost, the bread, and the milk, but there is a problem.

What is the problem?

Well, you can't buy just these items.

Why can't I buy just these items?

I am not going to let you buy the bread or the milk or the eggs unless you also buy a half a ton of iron ore and a bucket of nails and a book about cowboy poetry. In fact, now that I think about it, you are going to have to buy one of every item in the store.

Nobody would want to live that way, and nobody would want to shop that way. Of course, that is never the way we would want to do business in our government; yet, in some ways, it kind of is because a small handful of people put together that shopping list, so to speak, and put it together in one bill. Those bills are often hundreds and, in some cases, thousands of pages long, and we usually have no more than a few hours to read them before they are passed into law.

That is where this legislation comes about. The End Government Shutdowns Act would force Congress to abandon this barbaric, binary form of appropriations. Perhaps more importantly, it would end the threat of the shutdown, which is very often the propellant, the fuel, for perpetuating this barbaric form of alienation—this barbaric form of the disenfranchisement of most of the people represented by most Democrats and most Republicans in the Senate and in the House of Representatives.

Look, I understand that none of this is easy, and I have nothing but profound respect and affection for my colleagues who are involved in writing these bills. That respect and affection should cut both ways, and it should mean that we have the opportunity to vote on spending bills before they hit us so that we are not left with this awful, untenable, binary choice between funding everything that a small handful of Members has foreordained or voting for nothing and being blamed for a shutdown.

We have to end the process of spending by cliff. This and only this, I believe, is something that could bring certainty to Americans and will allow for more time to bring these bills to the floor and will allow for the kind of transparency that the American people need, expect, and deserve but, for the last decade or two, have not received.

Mr. President, I yield my time back to my friend and colleague, Senator JOHNSON from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. I yield time to Senator LEAHY.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have found so much of what I have heard that I can agree with. I certainly agree that we ought to be able to pass our annual appropriations bills. I certainly

agree that we should prevent Federal Government shutdowns, which waste billions upon billions upon billions of dollars' worth of taxpayers' money, plus all of the burdens they put on American families, Federal employees, and so forth. But I am afraid that my good friends on the other side of the aisle are letting rhetoric get ahead of reality.

The reality is that the majority in the Senate controls the calendar in the Senate. All of these appropriations bills could have been brought up in June or July or September. We could have voted on them, piece by piece, up and down, and had amendments. Everybody would have had plenty of time to have read every line of them, to have amendments to strike things or add things they wanted. I mention this because it can be done. The House of Representatives, under Democratic control—I don't mean that to be partisan but to show the difference—they actually passed all of their appropriations bills and its COVID bill, the so-called Heroes Act, in May.

In the Appropriations Committee, we have been working very hard. Senator SHELBY's staff has, and mine has too. We have given up a lot of time with my colleagues—and for all good reasons. Many of us stayed here working on those appropriations bills, but we couldn't bring the bills up.

Now, the Republican leader, the majority leader, could have brought up any one of these bills at any time he had wanted. We could have done it, allowing a 1-hour time agreement for amendments. After all, the Republicans in the majority have nothing to fear about that. If they don't like an amendment, they can vote it down. This would give the Senator from Utah and everybody else a chance to read each one of these bills. If they don't like it, bring up an amendment to strike it. That could have been done; it was not.

One of the reasons it was not done was because we had to take up Senate time, day after day after day, to put through nominees—mostly backed by special interest groups—on the Federal bench and elsewhere. We had to vote on those. Why? We can vote on those, but also take the time to vote on these things. Bring up the appropriations bills, and vote on them one by one. Amend them if you want; vote them down if you want.

I say to my friends on the other side of the aisle, You have the majority. You can vote them all down or vote them all up. But what happens when you enact an automatic CR, which I would oppose, it means you don't work out the parts of full-year appropriations bills. There would be no incentive for Members to negotiate full-year appropriations bills. We were not elected to put the government on autopilot. We were elected to make careful choices.

I would argue the reason we are here is that people were afraid to actually stand up and vote up or down on appropriations bills earlier this year when they had the chance. It is easy to say: Golly gee, let's have an automatic continuing resolution. Sounds good. What it says is that we can take all of our weekends off. We can have the government fly us home. We can pay for all of these things, but we don't do our work.

What I am saying is we should have stayed here over a few weekends. I would say to my friends on the other side of the aisle, the Republican side, allow the bills to come up one by one and vote them up or down. If you don't like parts of it, vote to take it out. Vote it up or down. Again, you have the majority, if you don't like what is in there. Full-year appropriations bills give Congress the opportunity to address the needs of today rather than continue the priorities of the past.

I have been here long enough to know that things that looked great 2 or 3 years ago are not the priorities today because things change. Certainly, under COVID, we have seen, in many ways, a 15-year change in society, education, business, industries, and more in 15 weeks.

So each year in the annual appropriations bills, Congress adjusts spending levels to deal with emerging issues facing the American people. We can eliminate funding for projects that have been completed or no longer needed. We can direct funding to higher priority programs. It is detailed, exacting work. It is nice to talk in slogans and generalities, but I invite those Senators to sit down and go through, day by day, the kind of work the Senators and the superb staff, both Republican and Democratic, do in putting together this legislation. It is detailed, exacting work, but it is what the American people expect. That is what we all thought was a smart decision about how to invest their hard-earned tax dollars.

If you operate under an automatic CR, none of these adjustments can be made. Automatic CRs lock in the status quo, and we can say: Bye-bye. We are heading home for the holidays. Oh, an emergency in COVID came up? Well, it is not in the automatic CR, so tough. We didn't have time to do anything about it. Oh, there is flooding in Florida or Nebraska or fires in the West or anything else. Well, the automatic CR didn't cover it because we didn't have money for it a year before.

No, that is not the way to do it. The Congress and the White House have a responsibility to work together to enact funding bills to keep the government open. Automatic CRs might save face and time and allow us to do other things that we might like to do back home, but in doing so, they relieve us of our obligations to the Constitution and to the American taxpayer. We shouldn't be relieved of these obligations.

I know the last time we had a government shutdown, it was over a bill where the President felt that it didn't give him enough for a wall along the border between the United States and Mexico, a wall that is being built at great expense and accomplishing very little. That is why it was stopped.

So for a month and a half, we sat there, parts of the government closed down, our States, our people, our Federal Government losing billions upon billions upon billions of dollars. You know how that finally got reopened? We started off a series of meetings on a Monday. The House was in session; the Senate was in session. It was a good time to begin. We began in Senator SHELBY's office, and we continued it in my office here in the Capitol.

We had two the chair and ranking member of the House Appropriations Committee. We had two Senators: my good friend—and he is a good and close friend—DICK SHELBY, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and myself as the vice chairman. And the four of us sat there for 3 or 4 hours. We talked about everything from photography to travel and then went in line by line of the bills, and we came to an agreement. And we were able to explain our agreement to the House and the Senate, and it was voted through, and the government reopened.

Incidentally, the President praised it. He said that he had gone through it, and it was so good. And I thank him for doing that because it gave him a lot less money for the wall than the bill that he vetoed had given him.

But the government reopened.

I mention this because it seems that those billions of dollars were spent more as a political stunt than something that benefits hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

So instead of rhetoric that ignores reality, let's get to the reality. Let's pledge—whoever is in the majority in the end—we will bring up each of the appropriations bills, vote them up or down or amend them. We could have done this in June or July. If we had done that, we wouldn't be where we are now. It was a missed opportunity.

If we say let's have an automatic CR no matter what happens, whether we have earthquakes, floods, fires, COVID, attacks on the United States, anything else, we can just sit back and relax, not have to do all of the weekends and holidays and late-night work that many of us in both parties do on appropriations because we have got an automatic CR.

When I came to the Senate, both the Republican and Democratic leaders told me—and I was the most junior Member of the Senate at the time—that we should be the conscience of the Nation. It meant doing your work.

I never expected to be the dean of the Senate, but I have seen both Republicans and Democrats do that work. At times, it has been into late Friday night or early Saturday morning, but we have done it and passed it.

Where did those days go? Where did those days go?

So when Senator SHELBY became chair and I became vice chair, we passed a series of appropriations bills.

And I think we got 80, 90, 95, and sometimes 100 Senators to vote for those bills. We usually can't get a vote with that many to say the Sun rises in the East. The majority gave us time to bring those votes up, debate them, and vote them up or down.

I will have more comments to make. I don't question the good intentions of any Senator here, but what I am saying is, we could have done this in June; we could have done it in July; we could have done it in August; we could have done it in September; we could have done it in November. And to now complain—well, up to the last few days, we have got to change everything. Instead, let's pledge that we will follow regular order in the coming days.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of the Senator from Vermont.

I think what Senator LEE and I were talking about is, you know, as opposed to the way it used to be, when we got here in 2011, the appropriations process was completely broken, and it is still broken. And it has been a bipartisan failure.

I arrived in 2011 under Democratic leadership. Now we are in a Republican leadership. It is broken.

The good news is the Preventing Government Shutdown Act is a bipartisan solution. It passed 12-to-2 out of my committee. It is cosponsored, largely, by Senator LANKFORD and Senator HASSAN.

The concerns that the Senator from Vermont expressed about an automatic CR and passage of this bill is addressed in the bill. The bill has the disciplines to force us to only work on appropriations bills. We can leave town but not on the Federal dime, not on campaign money. We will have to pay for that ourselves.

And I don't know what we are going to pay for it with because we are not going to get paid until we actually pass the appropriations bill. So the discipline is already set in here. That is what is so beautiful about this bill, what is so elegant about it.

As I said, in Wisconsin, once they enforced this discipline, the most we have ever had is a 4-month CR. We are 71 days into this CR, and we are going to pass it for another week.

This process is broken. The Preventing Government Shutdown Act is a solution that will force us back to the good old days, where we bring up the appropriations bills, because my guess is that not many Members of Congress aren't going to want to not get paid and not be able to go back to their district.

So it will focus our minds. We will only be able to work on appropriations bills, other than in a national emergency. We will get the job done. That is what happened in Wisconsin. This is a solution.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 304, S. 1877. I ask that the committee-reported substitute amendment be withdrawn, the Braun substitute amendment at the desk be considered agreed to, and the bill, as amended, 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. Is there objection?

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Reserving the right to object.

My colleagues, I believe here today, are promoting legislation that they claim will spur Congress to pass appropriations bills in the event of a government shutdown—in other words, to avoid it.

I think they have a good idea, but would that do the job? I doubt it, but this debate will go on, and it should because I agree with the frustration that so many of you have, including the Presiding Officer here. We are having to part with it.

My colleague from Vermont, Senator LEAHY, and I, for 2 straight years, with cooperation—bipartisanship—were able basically to pass these appropriations bills, most of them, for the first time in years. This has slowed down this year, absolutely. I know it is a big Presidential race and everybody running this year and that throws it into it.

But we would like to pass these bills before October 1, just as you would. But I don't believe this legislation would do what you think it would do, and I think it deserves further inquiry and scrutiny.

I believe it would exacerbate, in some ways, the problem that we are trying to resolve here. We are right now close to closing out, hopefully, all of our appropriations bills. We call it an omnibus. I agree with their frustration. We should, as a body, both parties, every Member of the Senate, should have had the priority, No. 1, to do this before October 1 each year, as we used to do it.

So unless this legislation somehow prohibits political partisanship, I don't believe it will increase the probability that we get our work done, shutdown or not.

I think the key is to work together. Senator LEAHY and I have demonstrated that in a few years, but we need all of us to come together on this and place the rules first, place the government—don't shut down.

I stand before you every day. The worst thing we can do is shut down the government. The specter of a shutdown is bad in itself, which we face right today.

So I believe the most important incentive right now for us to do is try to work together. If we can't, we are going to have to do something. It might be something like what you are talking about, but I think it deserves further debate, further inquiry.

And there is a political downside to all this, I know. But if we work together, we will get these bills passed. Nobody is more acutely aware of that than my colleague from Vermont, who has been on the Appropriations Committee for many years, before I was even there. But the American people, as someone said here today, elected us to do our job. They are absolutely right—we should do our job and do it promptly, and we can if we work together.

Having said that, I know this issue is not going away unless we do our job like we should, but I object to the unanimous consent request at this point.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. I appreciate the words from the Senators from Vermont and Alabama. I would like to work with you, and I think all of us would like to work with you on a solution to this problem. So I appreciate those words, and I look forward to working with you in the future on this.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I have profound respect and admiration for both the Senator from Alabama and the Senator from Vermont. As you can tell from their remarks, they are congenial, collegial, and delightful people. They also have many decades of legislative experience between the two of them, and the country has been blessed by their gifts, their talents, and their willingness to work hard.

I want to respond to a couple of points made a moment ago, one suggesting, perhaps, that the answer to all of this is simply a desire to work together, as if that were somehow not what we have in mind.

We were also told a moment ago that they are almost finished with the appropriations process, that it is almost complete. Now, if that is the case, then I would ask the question, why haven't we been permitted to see it? Why haven't the other Members of the U.S. Senate been able to see that? It is a little bit hard for some of us to hear that if we all work together, we can get this done, when that is literally all we are asking.

I don't think any one of us supporting Senator JOHNSON's legislation is here saying that it is perfect or here saying that it would magically solve every problem in the world or even every problem in the U.S. Senate having to do with the spending process. We are not saying that. But what we are saying is that without it, we will stay stuck in the same closed-loop system.

So to suggest that there is somehow a lack of desire on our part or on the part of anyone who is not an appropriator or anyone who is not the chairman and ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, that this is somehow a product of a lack of desire and willingness to work together, that is not fair. That is not accurate. That is quite

the opposite of the truth. What we are asking for is a seat at the table.

Article V of the Constitution outlines the procedure for amending the Constitution, for making changes to the structure of government that we have, what it may and may not do. Article VI of the Constitution preemptively disposes of any proposed constitutional amendment that would alter the principle of equal representation in the Senate. It is the one rule that cannot be changed. It is so fundamental to our system of government, to this system of government that has helped foster the development of the greatest civilization the world has ever known, that in this Chamber, every State has to be represented equally. That doesn't happen and, indeed, it can't happen when you have some of the most significant measures that will ever come before this body commandeered by one committee, the Committee on Appropriations.

Now, granted, as has been suggested in the last couple of speeches we have heard, we have some great talent among our members on the Appropriations Committee. We have great talent among the staffers on the Appropriations Committee. They work really hard. They are really smart. They are really determined, and they are highly specialized. That isn't the problem. The problem is that in most circumstances, because of the way we bring things up, most of us are completely disenfranchised from the process.

This doesn't mean that it is the fault of the Appropriations Committee. I don't believe that it is. It is, instead, a fault of the way in which we schedule votes and the fact that these things aren't brought up until the last possible minute, and then we are given this awful choice of, vote for a whole bunch of things that you don't necessarily support and can't even completely know about or vote against it and be blamed for a government shutdown.

That is all this bill is trying to do, is to get us out of that toxic loop—a loop that is the opposite of collegial, the opposite of respectful, and that is utterly incompatible with the principle of equal representation in the Senate—a principle that cannot be undone even by a constitutional amendment.

Mr. LEAHY. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. LEE. Yes, I will.

Mr. LEAHY. Should we be able to represent our constituents? Of course. He and I agree, and he and I have agreed on a lot of different things, especially constitutional issues, in this body. And I share his concern of suddenly being handed a piece of legislation like this, and we are going to vote on it in 10 minutes or an hour or so.

Would he agree with me that if the leader said that Tuesday of next week—say this was done earlier in the year—Tuesday of next week, we will bring up this part of the appropriations bill from the committee, the committee having voted on it, Republicans and Democrats—I think it is close to a third of the U.S. Senate that is on that committee—having voted on it, and it will be open to amendments. Then after we finish that one, we will bring up the next one.

Would that cover many of the problems that the Senator from Utah has?

Mr. LEE. In response to the question, the answer is yes. Absolutely yes. That is exactly what we want. That is exactly what we deserve. And this is one of many manifestations of the fact that my friend, my distinguished colleague, the senior Senator from Vermont, has the benefit of many decades of experience in this body. He has been here at times when the Senate has functioned precisely like that, as it should. That is exactly what we want. That is how the Senate is supposed to function, and that is how it has functioned for most of the existence of our great Republic.

So that in and of itself would not only help address the problem, it would be the solution to the problem. That is why I insist this is not a problem that can be fairly laid at the feet of the individual members of the Appropriations Committee or even necessarily the chairman and ranking member of the Appropriations Committee. It is a problem with the way we schedule votes, and it is also a problem related to the first, with a lack of willingness to allow amendments to be brought.

The filibuster is itself maligned and often misunderstood, but the purpose of a filibuster from the very origins of this institution was to allow for theoretically unlimited debate, discussion, and opportunities for amendments to legislation. Nowhere would that be more important than in the case of where we are spending the public's money. That is what we are supposed to be doing. That is how it always did work in the past. The very reason why we have the filibuster rule to begin with is to allow for, to facilitate, to encourage unlimited debate, discussion, and amendments.

So, yes, I wish this legislation weren't necessary, but it is with precisely that objective in mind that we push this legislation. Why? Well, some of us have been here for many years, and in the case of Senator JOHNSON and myself, we have been here now for a decade. We have hoped for that exact type of scenario that Senator LEAHY just described to come about, and I don't doubt Senator LEAHY's sincerity one bit in raising that point. That is exactly what we need.

The incentives aren't there. The incentives on the part of those making these decisions to bring these things up with too little time for debate, amendment, or even reading the bill and discussing it with our constituents—those making that decision have forestalled the kind of debate and discussion that needs to occur. The incentive structure is such that those making that very decision are not going to want to relinquish that immense power, particularly if they can be a part of and even control what goes into that bill, who knows about it when, and then virtually guarantee passage on the Senate floor.

Something has to change in order to alter that incentive structure to bring about exactly the kind of dynamic Senator LEAHY has described. Look, we can do this. It is not that hard. But we are going to have to adopt some changes to our procedures, and ultimately we owe it to our constituents not to bend unflinchingly and reflexively every single time somebody brings forward a spending bill at the very last minute.

I remember one of many moments in which this has occurred arose in March of 2018. We had been anticipating for many months a spending bill. We had a lot of conversations among and between Members about the need to debate, discuss, and amend spending legislation before it was brought to the floor. We had been assured that we would have more of an opportunity than we had in previous Congresses.

Then one Wednesday evening in March of 2018, we received an email. The email arrived at I believe about 8:30 or 8:45 in the evening. It told us that attached is a copy of a spending bill. We will be voting on this sometime in the Senate. We weren't told when. I opened the attachment. The attachment contained a 2,232-page spending bill spending well over $1 trillion.

We immediately started reviewing that. I divided up that legislation by section among my staff and then spent the entire night and the entire following day reviewing that legislation. We got a basic understanding of what it did but only rudimentary. A 2,232-page omnibus spending bill does not exactly read like a fast-paced novel.

To my great astonishment, before we were even finished reading that bill, much less before we had the opportunity to even conceive of or draft amendments, much less propose them, the House of Representatives passed that bill without amendment before lunch the next day. The Senate passed the same legislation about 12 or 13 hours later.

This process has repeated itself over and over again. We can't fool ourselves into believing that it is going to change without some alteration to procedure and to the set of incentives that perpetuate that vicious cycle—one that is no respecter of persons, no respecter of Republicans versus Democrats, liberals versus conservatives, or even Senators versus Representatives. It is just a fundamentally anti-American and undemocratic way of doing things. We can do better, and we must.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk today for a few minutes about something that I don't think has gotten the attention it deserves, and that is the many successes in foreign policy over the last 4 years.

I think at the top of my list of foreign policy successes in terms of unanticipated accomplishments that we would not have thought would happen would be the Abraham accords that were signed at the White House in September. This agreement paves the way for normalized relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Israel and Bahrain and I believe really establishes a way where the rest of the Middle East could hopefully follow this step in the right direction. I think not only is this one of the most significant moves in decades to promote peace and understanding in the Middle East, but, frankly, it probably wouldn't have happened if we hadn't had a President who hadn't spent years hearing how something like this was impossible. The President believed it was possible, and it was because of his strong leadership that the countries involved made it a priority to bridge the gap that everyone thought was unbridgeable, that really had separated these neighbors for generations.

What we see when we look at this and other events in recent times is that when our friends become friends with each other, we win. The United States wins when our friends also become friends with each other.

This agreement can be a model for future progress in the region. It is the first time in four decades that any Arab country has recognized Israel, and you can see it is already making a difference. We had debate on the floor yesterday about our continued partnership—our defense partnership—with the United Arab Emirates, and this was, obviously, an element in that debate. That partnership, over three different administrations, produced something that nobody would have anticipated in any of the earlier decades.

The President started his Middle East efforts by acknowledging Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in his first year in office. A few months later, he moved the U.S. Embassy there. Now, was this a new idea? Absolutely not a new idea. American Presidents have been saying for years that this was a good idea. Party platforms have said for years that Israel should be able to have their capital in Jerusalem acknowledged, but nobody had done it before. Congress had said repeatedly this should happen, but it hadn't happened and didn't happen until the Trump administration decided to make it happen.

Critics actually said that moving our embassy would hurt our credibility in the region, and, 3 years later, the Abraham accords proved that that was 100 percent wrong.

Another reason American credibility has soared in the Middle East is that President Trump took a strong stance against Iran. He did that by dealing with the nuclear agreement that President Obama and the Obama administration had struck with Iran as a bad idea. It was an idea that actually allowed Iran to eventually get a nuclear weapon and reduced sanctions on the country's leaders as they continued to sponsor terrorism around the world. In fact, he even returned substantial amounts of money that we now know went, in large part, into terror-building network efforts.

The agreement was badly handled from the start. It didn't work after we entered into it. We didn't enter into it in any kind of binding way because it was clear, at the time, that if this agreement would have been presented as a treaty, it had no chance of being approved by the Senate.

So it was entered into, thinking: This is such a great idea that the next President will just have to do it, whether the country is bound to it or not.

The hard work of doing our work the right way makes a difference, and, in fact, that agreement would have been changed before a Senate would have considered ever approving it. But it would have been either approved or not approved rather than the process we went through, which was a lot of Senate opposition but no response to that opposition.

President Trump put a spotlight on the deal's failure to protect our national security. He took a strong new approach to applying maximum pressure on the Iranian regime, and it has had impact. Eventually, that new view led to eliminating Qasem Soleimani, who was clearly the architect of Iran's terrorist activities and the attacks on Americans. There has been no doubt about that for a long time. Iran was the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism. General Soleimani was the No. 1 architect of that state sponsorship of terrorism, and the President was willing to do what needed to be done there. The world is a safer place with him gone. Iran knows that we will not turn a blind eye on aggression or on false promises or, often, even on things being said that, on the face of them, are clearly not true and the world community is expected to agree with them, and, frankly, in the case of Iran, often decides that the best course is to agree to the things that you know are not true which are presented as if they are true and accepted as if they are true. This doesn't get you where you want. Accommodating or rewarding our enemies doesn't advance peace in the Middle East or anywhere else. Supporting our allies and building stronger alliances and holding terrorists accountable does.

Stronger alliances are also a goal of the Trump administration's new focus on the Indo-Pacific region. The President recognized that China is the greatest threat to democracy and freedom in the world. He understands that America cannot counter that threat alone, and because of that, has reached out in meaningful ways. While other administrations have said they would pivot to the Pacific, the Trump administration actually oversaw a period of renewed engagement in the area and renewed branding of the area that indicated that the Indo-Pacific is now that command and the Indo-Pacific is now that focus. We have strengthened our alliances with India and with Australia and other countries in the region. We began working to foster a multilateral community—one that will protect the free and open nature of the region from the threat of China.

I was just reading in the news today that China clearly is sending a message in Hong Kong: If you don't want to be in jail and you are for Hong Kong freedom, you just need to leave right now. And, apparently, they are willing to help you get to where your thoughts don't impact others who are willing to live under—and, maybe, have no choice but to live under—the repression of China.

The President also took action to strengthen global security and stability by asking our allies to pull their weight. For too many years, other countries seemed content to let American taxpayers bear the cost of defending freedom everywhere in the world. President Trump challenged the other members of NATO to meet the organization's guideline of spending 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense. Our allies stepped up in many cases and did better than they had been doing.

In 2016, just 4 of the 28 countries in NATO met the 2 percent guideline—4 out of 28. Today, that number is still not at 28, but it is at 10 countries that now exceed the guideline. Remember, four countries met the guideline 3 years and 10 months ago. Ten countries have now exceeded the guideline, and every country in the alliance with a military has increased its defense spending.

That is important progress, and it wouldn't have happened if the President of the United States had not been willing to say the obvious, and, frankly, be very direct about it and make himself an uncomfortable partner at the negotiating table. But if what you are uncomfortable about is that you are willing to say, ''Do what you have agreed to do,'' it is about time somebody not only said, ''Do what you have agreed to do,'' but said it in a way that other countries took it seriously.

The President sought to address imbalances and protect U.S. interests in the area of global trade. The Trump administration replaced the NAFTA agreement with a new trade deal with Mexico and Canada. NAFTA was great for all three countries, but it needed to be improved. It needed to be updated, and now it has been.

In my State, Missouri, those two countries are our two biggest trading partners, and that is the case for the United States. Mexico and then Canada dwarf trade with almost every other country in the world as they trade with the United States, and the new agreement will lead to more jobs and bigger paychecks in all three countries. Our goal in our neighborhood should be not

just to make ourselves stronger but to make our neighbors stronger, because we are stronger when our neighbors are stronger.

Nationwide, exports are expected to grow by $2.2 billion under the USMCA. And our trade relationship with Japan, the world's third largest economy, is even stronger, thanks to a new agreement that went into effect at the start of the year.

So it is clear that there has been lots of activity in America's foreign policy over the past 4 years. There has been a lot of important progress and a lot of success stories, and an awful lot of it was done in a very unconventional way. So, frankly, it just doesn't get covered by the traditional trade press or the traditional foreign policy press or the traditional defense press in ways that really the results should produce.

These are not areas that get the attention that they deserve. I think, when people look back at the 4 years that we have just completed in foreign policy, they are going to look at what has happened, understand it in the context of what was happening, and I am sure they will believe that these items I talked about today led to a stronger and safer country as we approach the years ahead of us.

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

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

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after the remarks of the next speaker, I may be recognized for such time as I may consume.

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

The Senator from Utah.

TRIBUTE TO ROB BISHOP

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the career of a remarkable public servant whose accomplishments have left an indelible mark upon our State and upon our country. Congressman ROB BISHOP has earned his place among the greats in Utah's political history, and we thank him for his service.

ROB has dedicated his political career to fighting the tough battles over issues that matter to the people of my State, from the virtue of federalism, States' rights, and protecting individual liberty, to promoting a strong national defense and sound public lands policy. And fight he did.

Four years ago, Puerto Rico was fast approaching a fiscal cliff when ROB, as chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, led a successful, bipartisan effort to pass a complicated rescue package to restructure Puerto Rico's debt before it was too late.

While ROB will never rush to take credit or seek the spotlight, his legislative achievements are enduring and deserve our full praise and recognition.

His accomplishments manifest closer to home as well. The brave men and women of our military and civilian workforce at Hill Air Force Base know ROB as a tremendous advocate and a devoted friend. Through the War on Terror, improvements and changes in aircraft, and updates to our nuclear arsenal, ROB has defended our Hill Air Force Base valiantly. At Dugway Proving Ground in Tooele, his commitment delivered the completion of an emergency aircraft runway.

ROB's impressive efforts and steady leadership have raised Utah's profile for our national defense. So, too, has his advocacy for the Utah Test and Training Range, so it makes sense that this key to our Nation's military readiness should bear his name. Next Congress, I intend to introduce a bill to rename it the ''Bishop Utah Test and Training Range.''

Rare is a man with such professional distinction, intellect, and personal conviction for the well-being of family, neighbors, and strangers alike, who carries himself with such humility as ROB. If you have had the pleasure of being with ROB at a gathering, you know where to find him at the end of the night—staying behind to help gather the chairs.

Most of all, ROB is a teacher. From his time as a public school teacher to his career in public service, one of his highest priorities has been ensuring that the next generation of young leaders has access to educational opportunities, not only by securing revenue for public school as an elected official but also by devoting his time to host students in the Capitol to teach them about politics, policy, and our government.

It is an honor to recognize my friend ROB BISHOP as he begins his next chapter with his wife Jeralynn and their five children and nine grandchildren. For anyone who has not had the great pleasure of meeting ROB, you will likely easily recognize him on the street as maybe the last man in Washington who wears an impeccable three-piece suit.

Thank you, ROB, and good luck.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

WESTERN SAHARA

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I have already asked unanimous consent that I be recognized for such time as I may consume.

This is what I want to do. Something happened today that is deeply troubling to me, and I have a written response to what happened today. I am going to go ahead and read that written response. Then, I want to talk about it.

My written response is—and I will take it so everybody will have the benefit of this. I am talking about people here in this country, people in Africa, people all around the world who are interested in this issue.

OK, this is the written response:

I think that all countries should recognize Israel, and applaud the president's unprecedented efforts to foster recognition between Israel and Arab nations through the Abraham Accords.

Today's White House announcement alleging Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara is shocking and deeply disappointing. I am saddened that the rights of the Western Saharan people have been traded away.

In 1966, as West Africa was being decolonized, the UN General Assembly agreed—

This is 1966—agreed the Sahara deserves a referendum of self-determination for its own future.

The United States has supported this policy for decades and has worked to accomplish a referendum of self-determination. Until today, this Administration had continued our long history, one that has remained consistent across administrations—

Democrat and Republican—

We're not alone in this position: the African Union, the United Nations, the International Court of Justice and the European Union have all agreed—the Sahrawi people have the right to decide [what] their own future [is going to be].

The president has been poorly advised by his team; he could have made this deal without trading [away] the rights of a voiceless people.

During my most recent visit to the Sahrawi refugee camps, I visited with the children that live there. They were joyous, happy, ordinary children who didn't know yet that they were part of a frozen, forgotten conflict where their hopes and freedoms were dying a cruel death.

I'm thinking about them and all the Sahrawians today. I won't stop fighting for them. I won't let the world forget them.

Today's announcement does not change the United Nations or the EU positions, nor the charter of the African Union nor the opinion of the [International Court of Justice]—a referendum must still happen.

I urge these organizations to stand strong to support Western Sahara's right to self-determination and am confident the [United States] will be able to return to the policy we've held since 1966.

Let me tell you what this is all about. During the colonization period in Africa, when different countries had colonies there, Spain had the colony of the land that is in question today. It was called the Spanish Sahara area at that time.

Now, if you remember your history, Franco was President at that time, and this was back when things were falling apart for Spain. Franco was losing a lot of the control, and they were not in a position to hold onto their colonies—not just in Africa but anyplace else in the world.

So at that time, the U.N. came in, in 1966. This goes all the way back to 1966. The U.N. asked for a referendum for self-determination for those people. So they recognized all the way back—that is, the United Nations recognized—the sovereignty of the Western Saharan people. That has been consistent since then.

That was 1966. Now, in 1975, when there were a lot of people kind of lining up to see who could get control, Morocco jumped in with all of their resources and did all they could at that

time to capture that area and to absorb that within Morocco—in other words, to take away from the free people of Western Sahara their land. And they did that.

So the International Court of Justice went on to say: Well, if the United Nations couldn't do it, let's at least give them the right for a referendum for self-determination. That was 1975. Immediately after that, Morocco invaded Western Sahara.

Now, you have to keep in mind that this is Morocco, with all of the resources and all the wealth that they had, taking on a country that was armed with crude instruments. These are the people who rightfully owned and have lived in Western Sahara.

Western Sahara, if you look—if I had time, if I had known about this, I would have brought the charts down to show where this land was and where it is today.

But, in 1975, the International Court of Justice made it very clear that they had the right to the territory—that Morocco had no right to the territory of Western Sahara. Now, they invaded Western Sahara. Spain and France were complicit at that time. Spain had already colonized that area, and France had desires to do that.

But today—today, as we speak today—there is not a country out there that recognizes the right of Morocco over Western Sahara—until today, when this statement came out that we are trying to recognize those rights.

Nobody—now, I am talking about what I have already listed, all of the people: the African Union, the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the European Union—all of them—they recognize Sahrawi as the people who have the right to decide their own future. Everyone is in agreement.

I can remember talking, at one time, to Netanyahu over in Israel and explaining to them why Morocco should not be able to trade and somehow get control of land that they are not entitled to in order just to say: We recognize Israel.

Yes, we want all Arab nations to recognize Israel, and this is something this President has done. But this is the area that involves not just two countries, Morocco and Israel. It is all of the countries in Africa, virtually everybody in East and West Africa and all the surrounding area. They all agree that that is the territory of Western Sahara and that they should have a referendum of self-determination.

We all have agreed with that for years. We are talking about back to 1966. Everyone is in agreement that they are the ones who are entitled to that.

So in 1991 they had a ceasefire, and a mission began to provide a referendum for self-determination. That was the United Nations and virtually everybody else. Everyone was in agreement on that. Certainly, it was initiated from the United Nations, and that was to have a ceasefire in 1991, by the U.N., and work toward a self-determination.

Then, in 2004, the United States and Morocco signed a free-trade agreement. Now, this is kind of interesting, because this is a joint effort between our country, the United States, and Morocco for a free-trade agreement. In that free-trade agreement, they agreed to explicitly exclude Western Sahara because Morocco does not have sovereignty over it. Now, that was in the agreement in 2004 that was signed by both the United States and Morocco. So they agreed at that time, as everyone else did, that that should be an independent country with the right of self-determination.

Then the African Union came along. So far, you have the United Nations. You have the United States and Morocco in a signed free-trade agreement. But then you also had Morocco, when it joined the AU, signing a document. This is when it came from the African Union. They recognized Western Sahara as its own country. This is the African Union.

Now, we are talking about 52 nations in the African Union that all agree on this. No one is in disagreement on this.

And then Morocco, when it joined the AU, signed a document. When they joined the African Union—we are talking about Morocco now, up on the northeast edge of that territory. When they joined the AU, or the African Union, they signed a document acknowledging all member states and their borders; that is, acknowledging the Western Sahara area as not a part of Morocco. Now, this is Morocco agreeing to this.

So you have the United Nations in 1991. You have the United States and Morocco in the free-trade agreement in 2004. You have an agreement explicitly stating where the lines should be. Then you have the African Union coming along and recognizing. This is all of the countries, 52 nations in the African Union. So we have all of them in agreement with this.

South Africa is the present chair of the AU, and one of their priorities is to resolve the Western Sahara issue.

Now, all of that happened prior to today. And, as I say in my written statement, I really believe—I know our President has a big heart. I have argued for him and to benefit him. The various times that we have had conflicts out there—and one of them was when they came out with a statement that they were going to immediately—this was a couple of years ago—move the people out of Germany and move them back to the United States; that that was going to be done before the end of the year. And I made the public statement. That was not the President talking. That was a policy that came out of the White House, and I seriously doubted that he even knew about it and certainly would not agree with it.

If there is one thing the President is compassionate about, it is the families. You can't just uproot the families who were stationed in Germany and move them back to the United States—kids in school and all these things. He is a compassionate person. He is the first one in line to take care of our troops every time there is a problem.

This is the same situation. In this case, he is not the type of person that would bag the freedom-loving people of Western Sahara to Morocco.

So that is what happened. This is an old issue. It dates back to 1966. I can remember—and this is highly unusual—as a Member of the U.S. Senate, there was a hearing in the House—this is about maybe 5 or 6 years ago—and I served. I asked to be a witness in that hearing.

The hearing was about Western Sahara and Morocco. Now, keep in mind that Morocco is a very wealthy country. Virtually every lobbyist in Washington is paid by them. At that time, I could remember standing there in that hearing, in the House of Representatives, and listening to all the lobbyists that they had hired against a country that didn't have any money.

They don't have, really, any formal armaments. They are heroic people. They are fighters. They want to continue to fight for their freedom, but they don't have the resources.

So this is way back then, and I pointed out that Morocco has used all of their wealth to try to get the land that justly belongs to Western Saharan people. So that is not anything new. That has been happening for a long time.

At that time, I remember I took the transcript at that time—I think it was 6 or 7 years ago—in that hearing. I said that Morocco owns every lobbyist in Washington, DC, and it is kind of the giant out there against this small group of people who are being thrown out of their land that they justly own.

It is self-determination. Who can fight and argue against self-determination? Certainly, our President is not the type of person who would fight against self-determination. He would be for self-determination. That is the kind of person he is. That is why this thing—I just think it is some poor advice from some advisers that threw in that thing.

As I said in my formal statement, he could have done that with them without giving away the rights and the land of the Western Saharan people.

So I just want to make sure that everyone knows that this is—I strongly support everything that this President has successfully been doing in bringing the Arab world into the Israeli world and doing something for peace in the Middle East.

Everybody else has tried. Every Democrat and Republican President I can think of, in memory, has tried to do this and has not been successful, until this President did it.

It is just, in this case, I don't think it was necessary to give away—to stand up the people, the just people in an area where they don't have any resources. They have been living in the

desert. Three generations now have come and gone, and all of them know that at one time there was peace and they owned their land and that day would come that they would get their land back. That hasn't happened yet.

I think with this mistake that was made, it is certainly not in the interest of all of our friends. I say that without any exceptions. They are all on our side on this thing. Our policy has been clear since 1966, and we have been committed.

Some time ago, 1994, I came from the House to the Senate, and I had a long visit at that time with Jim Baker, who had been the Secretary of State in the previous administrations. I called him up, and I said: You know, this is such a huge injustice, what has happened, what Morocco has done to these people of Western Sahara.

He said: You are right, and we have done everything.

I said: We have got to change that, and I am going to make that commitment.

This was back in 1994.

He said: Well, I admire you for doing it. I will do all I can to cooperate with you.

This is Jim Baker talking.

He said: I don't think you will be able to do it because they have too many resources, too much money, and the Western Saharan people don't have any money. They don't have any resources. And they are the ones who have been abused in this.

He said: Good luck. I will do everything I can to help you.

That was back when Jim Baker was Secretary of State. That was a long time ago. Since that time, every administration—and not just Republican administrations but Democratic administrations—have all been lined up saying: This is a sense of fairness. It is something that has to be corrected. We can't allow that giant to take over the righteous people.

And that is what has happened. So it is not over yet. I can assure you that I will make every effort I can to make sure that we go back to the policy that we had and that ultimately we will achieve. Maybe this will be just the thing. This shock treatment for the American people and for people around the world might be just the thing that is going to offer them an opportunity for a referendum for self-determination. Who can be against a referendum for self-determination? Certainly no Americans whom I know of.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

TRIBUTE TO SHARON PIERCE

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, I rise today to commend an outstanding Hoosier whose work in Indiana's child and family welfare system has touched countless lives, including my own. Sharon Pierce, president and CEO of The Villages—a nonprofit child and family services agency—will soon be retiring after a distinguished 47-year career of serving our children and our families.

Sharon also happens to be my aunt, and I have seen firsthand her love and dedication to Indiana's children. Her call to service started early in life. When she was young, Sharon's mother volunteered at a youth home in Fort Wayne. She and her siblings would help her mother with holiday parties. It was there that she first learned how important the family is to a child.

A graduate of Ball State University, Sharon's entire career since then has been dedicated to public service. Prior to her work at The Villages, she worked for several youth advocacy programs in Illinois. She also served as a deputy director at the Indiana Division of Family and Children—the forerunner of today's Indiana Department of Child Services. While at the Division of Family and Children, she helped create a 1–800 number to report suspected child abuse. She also established the Healthy Families Initiative, which still today provides resources to at-risk, first-time parents to help prevent abuse and neglect.

In 1992, she became the president and CEO of The Villages, where she has created a culture of compassion and a deep commitment to supporting families in need. At The Villages, children are enrolled in family and child support services, with the goal of helping to keep family members together. The Villages also provides foster care and offers support for relatives and family friends who are helping to raise a child, including education and child abuse prevention services.

Sharon has said: ''Even though The Villages is probably best known for high-quality foster care, the reality is we want to do anything we can to keep families together.''

''Anything we can to keep families together''—it is hard to imagine a mission more critical than this.

I am not the only one to offer my praise for Sharon Pierce. Indiana's Governor, Eric Holcomb, said the following:

> Sharon's saintly efforts over the decades touched the lives of countless Hoosier children. She taught, inspired, led so many others over the years to invest in those who need it the most.

Indiana Department of Child Services Director Terry Stigdon said:

> She exudes compassion and caring. . . . It's just innate to her being.

Sharon has dedicated her professional life to ensuring children have a bright future, regardless of their circumstances. Her work has inspired countless others, including me, and the policies I choose to focus on here in the Senate.

I know my Aunt Sharon is looking forward to spending more time with her husband—my Uncle Steve—their four children, and now their seven grandchildren. She has more than earned this next chapter in her life. But as a point of personal privilege and on behalf of the people of Indiana, I offer my heartfelt thanks for her decades of service, and I wish her very well in this next chapter.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

CORONAVIRUS

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I have to tell you, every day, I am hearing from Tennesseans who are asking what we are going to do about COVID relief. It is coming up in nearly every conversation that I have—with our county mayors, with citizens, with employers and employees; conversations with those who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Why can't we get something done?

The phones really started ringing last week when Speaker PELOSI, the Speaker of the House, accidentally revealed that it was politics and not principle that convinced her to spend months—months—standing between the American people and targeted relief that they are asking for and that they desperately need. It was politics—all politics to her. People were pawns that she was moving around, trying to get her way.

It is disgusting. It is a tragedy. But I will tell you this: It is nothing new. In fact, since July, Democrats have continuously blocked efforts to provide targeted relief. The minority leader obstructed these efforts in the hopes of passing a $3 trillion bill. That is right, trillion—$3 trillion bill. It was filled to the brim with partisan proposals that had nothing do with the pandemic and a bailout for fiscally irresponsible States and cities.

Tennesseans are very much opposed to having their hard-earned dollars that are tax dollars that come to the Federal Government used to bail out States that have chosen not to be fiscally responsible. They say: Above all else, do not bail out these States, these cities, these pension funds.

Let's be clear to the American people. It is the Speaker of the House and the minority leader who are holding noncontroversial relief—they are holding it hostage. There should be another round of PPP. There should be another increase, a plus-up, of unemployment. There should be more money for vaccines, testing, and getting children back to school. But, oh, no. For months, what did they want to do? Play politics. Play politics with people's lives. If that isn't the most tone-deaf thing that I have ever heard, I don't know what is. Perhaps some of my friends across the aisle should check their mail and make certain that their office phones are being answered. People are quite upset with them.

It doesn't stop there. I wish it did. It only gets worse. In the fall, the Democrats filibustered targeted relief proposals not once but twice and rejected

a much needed extension of the Paycheck Protection Program almost as soon as it was proposed. This month, more of the same. Their refusal to negotiate in good faith has made it abundantly clear to the business owners, the healthcare providers, and millions of other struggling Americans that partisan grandstanding is more of a priority for Democrats than doing their jobs.

The American people are not pawns, and it is time my colleagues in the minority stopped treating them as such. The House Speaker and Senate Democrats might have all the time in the world to stall. Maybe they are pretty comfortable with where they are. But outside of this Chamber, for a lot of our families and small businesses that are struggling, it is the eleventh hour. Now is not the moment to strong-arm the U.S. Senate into rubberstamping a radical liberal wish list. It is time to step up and deliver relief—targeted relief, relief we all agree will mean the difference between survival for many of these small businesses and economic collapse; money and support for vaccines; another full round of PPP funding for the businesses that need it most; and support for our frontline heroes and essential workers.

This bullet list of absolute essentials must also include reasonable, responsible liability protections for small businesses and healthcare workers. These protections are the flip side of relief funding. Without them, we take these business owners and workers out of one bad situation and put them right into another one. Without them, we effectively force entire industries to choose between economic survival or, in the case of healthcare workers, literal survival and death by opportunistic lawsuits. We can't allow this to happen.

One of the things that I have noticed this past year is how critical it is for us to be able to articulate problems and lay the foundation to address them before an emergency strikes.

In Tennessee, as in many other States, the number of people who live in rural and remote areas poses challenges when it comes to providing a variety of services that we all consider essential, chiefly among them, healthcare delivery and access to high-speed internet. I have worked with healthcare practitioners and advocates to cut a path forward for the widespread use of telemedicine.

Last year, I introduced the Rural Health Agenda to increase access to healthcare for the 60 million Americans who leave in rural areas. A crucial component of that legislative package was a set of provisions that lifted unnecessary regulatory barriers standing in the way of access to telemedicine. As always, it is the redtape that slows up progress. The pandemic only highlighted the importance of opening up contact-free access to healthcare.

Fortunately, in March, after a lot of meetings with the White House and Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma, we were able to roll back a particularly frustrating regulation preventing the use of telemedicine by Medicare enrollees.

Provisions I supported as part of the CARES Act further expanded access to telemedicine by removing even more of that redtape and providing funding for reimbursement to frontline healthcare providers.

Of course, access to telehealth and access to high-speed internet go hand in hand. You can't really have one without the other.

This week, I learned that the FCC, as a result of the recent Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction, has now made some great steps, and Tennessee is going to receive about $150 million to help close the digital divide over the next decade. These new connections will be a game changer for rural and underserved communities. Not only will they open up access to telehealth, distance learning, and remote work opportunities, they will open up the local economy and encourage growth and outside investment because these dollars are targeted to unserved areas.

This award, coupled with CARES Act funding put to work earlier this year, will help us build on our prepandemic work on behalf of rural and unserved Americans.

The Internet Exchange Act, a bipartisan bill I sponsored to provide grant funding for broadband infrastructure, recently reported out of our Commerce Committee.

The pieces are, indeed, falling into place, and, hopefully, we can keep the momentum going and finally get this job done: closing the digital divide, providing everyone with access to high-speed internet and allowing communities that have been cut off from economic development, from telehealth, from remote learning to enhanced law enforcement—allowing them to benefit.

It is not just a matter of connectivity or convenience. It is an investment in a better quality of life for all Americans who call the rural parts of this country home.

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. MORAN. 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 KEVIN RYAN

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, for those of us who have the privilege of working in the U.S. Senate, it allows us the opportunity to meet wonderful people who care about their country, who go to work every day and make sure that the country is safe and secure.

One of those individuals, whom I met over the last year—met a year ago and now has worked in my office—is Army LTC Kevin Ryan. He is a member of my staff as an Army fellow participating in the U.S. Army Congressional Fellowship Program.

I want to take a moment to recognize LTC Kevin Ryan's contribution, certainly, to my office, to my capabilities of representing Kansas in the U.S. Senate, but his commitment to the country as well.

Before he departs my office to return to the big Army at the start of the new year, I want to express my appreciation to Colonel Ryan for all of his hard work and his dedication and his service to our country.

Kevin's 14 years of service in the U.S. Army have developed his leadership abilities and shaped his perspective on major defense issues of national significance. These assets and attributes have made him an invaluable asset for our team as we work to serve Kansans, members of the military, and our veterans.

Before joining our office, Kevin's assignments have taken him around the world in service to our country.

Kevin earned his commission from Norwich University, the Military College of Vermont. He has served four combat tours, two in Afghanistan and two in Iraq, and he has also been deployed to Korea, Germany, and Italy. His most recent deployment took him to Iraq in 2017, where he served as a senior intelligence officer for the brigade that assisted Iraqi security forces in the liberation of Mosul from the Islamic State.

Kevin is lucky to have his wife Lindsey, his daughter Colleen, and son John by his side. He is blessed to have their unwavering support.

Kevin joined our team in January of 2019. From day one, he embraced Kansas, its people, and the challenges they face day in and day out. He is well known for displaying his love of Kansas outwardly, often wearing a Kansas necktie in meetings and on Zoom calls.

He has made it a priority to spend time in our State and learn from Kansans so he can bring their thoughts and ideas back to the Nation's Capital. These personal conversations with Kansans and Kevin's experience in the Army helped drive meaningful policy.

He has led the efforts to recognize the important work of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the only all-African-American, all-female battalion to be deployed overseas during World War II. The Six Triple Eight, as this battalion has come to be known, sorted millions of pieces of backlogged mail so the troops serving on the frontlines could hear from families and loved ones. Their efforts boosted morale and directly contributed to our servicemembers' fighting spirit toward the end of the war. Kevin has been a tireless advocate for these women, and I commend his dedication to this cause.

Though I am sad he will be leaving our office at the end of the month, I know he will serve the Army well next

year in the Army's programs office, where he will be a highly effective ambassador to Congress for the Army.

Kevin is one of the most impressive military officers I have had the honor of knowing. I hold him in the highest regard, personally and professionally. He is a significant asset to our country and to the U.S. Army. Kevin represents the best the Army has to offer, and I know he will continue to benefit the future of our Nation.

There is no group of people I hold in higher regard than those who serve our Nation, and I want to reiterate my gratitude to Kevin and to his family for their dedication and service to our Nation.

Once again, Kevin, thank you for all you have done for Kansans, all you have done for our team as we serve those Kansans. You have been a model of selfless service and leadership. I know you will continue to do great things throughout your Army career and your life of service, wherever that path may lead.

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

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, we are currently in the midst of the worst moment of the pandemic up until now.

We have recordbreaking numbers of deaths, of diagnoses of people with COVID–19, of hospitals unable to accommodate even more people.

And in the midst of this pandemic, obviously, we are also in a severe economic meltdown, and there are economists who are telling us that the desperation of working families in this country today, right now, is worse than at any time since the Great Depression.

In Vermont and all over this country, we have workers who have lost their jobs and their income; people who are, by the millions, behind in their rent and are afraid of being evicted, afraid of losing their homes; people who have lost their health insurance, unable to go to a doctor. In the midst of a terrible pandemic, they don't have health insurance, can't go to a doctor when they get sick.

And what we are seeing today is a record number of Americans who are struggling, literally, with hunger, unable to feed their kids. I know in Vermont and all over this country there are lines of automobiles, cars of people—people who had never received governmental help—in line for emergency bags of groceries.

That is what is going on in this country today.

Now, back in March, in the beginning of the pandemic, this Congress came together—Democrats and Republicans and President Trump came together—and virtually unanimously passed the CARES Act, $2.2 trillion, which, among many other features, provided a $600 supplement to unemployment benefits for 4 months and $1,200 direct payments for every working-class adult in this country, plus $500 for their children.

And here is the truth: That program, that CARES Program, saved lives, gave dignity to people who were at their wit's end, and saved this economy from further downfall.

Well, today, we are where we are, which is at another terrible moment in this pandemic, and this Congress must act. We cannot leave here to go home to our families for the Christmas holidays while other families throughout this country, by the millions, are wondering how they are going to pay the rent or feed their kids. We cannot do that.

And I am proud to say that Senator HAWLEY from Missouri and I have worked together on a pretty simple amendment that he will be talking about in a second, which says that we must include in any legislation that is passed a direct payment of $1,200 for adults and $500 for kids.

We cannot, we must not leave Washington unless we do that. And next week I am going to do everything that I can to make sure that that happens. We cannot, we will not leave Washington unless we make certain that millions of families have the economic assistance that they need.

So we are working on bipartisan legislation, and Senator HAWLEY has done a very, very good job on this, and I am proud to yield the floor to him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I am delighted to join with Senator SANDERS in this important legislation.

It is very simple legislation, and this is, to my mind, a very simple proposition. Here is the proposition: that when it comes to COVID relief in the midst of this crisis, working families and working people should be first to get relief, not last. Their interests, their needs should be first on our to-do list, not last.

Now, I have heard some of my colleagues say that there just isn't enough left for working families; that once we take care of our other priorities in COVID relief, there just isn't enough left to give direct assistance to individuals.

I want to respectfully suggest that those priorities are exactly reversed. We should begin with the working people of this country, and that is why the legislation that Senator SANDERS and I are introducing, which I believe every Senator voted for in March—it is simple legislation—$1,200 for each individual, $2,400 for a couple, and $500 for every dependent in the family. It is exactly what this Congress approved overwhelmingly back in March, and it was, indeed, a lifeline. I know it was for Missourians in my State, for working families in my State.

I remember, in the hours and days after Congress passed this in March, fielding call after call after call from friends, from people I didn't know in my State but whom I represent, who called me to say: First of all, is it really true? Are we actually going to be getting this support? And then just to say thank you.

And I said: Don't thank me. Thank you for being the ones who have built this country, the ones who sustain this country, the ones on whom this country depends.

And I will just say also, as a matter of fairness—if the U.S. Government is going to shut down your business, if it is going to tell you to go home for health reasons, if it is going to give you no choice in the matter, I think that there is an obligation to support and help the people who are affected, through no fault of their own. Let's be clear. The millions of Americans who are out of work because of this pandemic, they haven't done anything wrong. The 853,000 Americans who today, the new numbers tell us, filed for unemployment benefits, they are not at fault in this pandemic.

We want to support and stand with working individuals and working families. I want the working people of Missouri to know that they are first on the priority list, and when it comes to COVID relief, we will not leave this town until we have voted—up or down—until we have voted on direct relief for working people in my State, in Senator SANDERS's State, and in every State in this Union.

With that, I thank Senator SANDERS, and I yield back.

Mr. SANDERS. Well, thank you very much, Senator.

And let me just say this: In March, as Senator HAWLEY indicated, we came together, and I had the same experience in Vermont. People in desperation called the office: When can we get the check? We desperately need it. And I suspect it was the same thing in Texas and the same thing in every other State in this country. People are hurting.

We cannot go home unless we address the needs of those people. And the amendment that Senator HAWLEY and I are introducing could not be simpler. It is $1,200 in direct payment for adults up to a certain limit—the same limit as was in the CARES Act—and $500 for their children. We have already voted and passed that exact same provision in March, and the situation today is not better. In some respects, it is worse.

So I would hope that we would have bipartisan support for this legislation. Look, it is no great secret, whether you are a Republican, Democrat, or whatever, that people are losing faith in their government. They are hurting; their kids are hurting; their parents are hurting. They look to Washington and they say: Do you know that we exist or are you just worried about your rich friends and your campaign contributors?

In this moment of economic crisis, we have got to do everything that we can to restore faith that this government works for ordinary people. So let us do the right thing. Let us pass this amendment in a bipartisan way. Let us show the working families of America that we understand what they are going through, and we are going to stand with them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 2420

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I am glad to be here on the floor of the Senate with my friend Senator BOB MENENDEZ asking that the U.S. Senate advance legislation to establish a National Museum of the American Latino.

As a proud Texan, I am fortunate to have grown up in a State steeped in the contributions of Hispanics and Latinos. Approximately 40 percent of our population is composed of Latinos in Texas, but they are not monolithic by any stretch of the imagination, which is why we need a museum to tell their stories.

There are the Tejanos, whose roots in the Lone Star State predate our statehood or even Texas independence, as well as those who have emigrated from other States or countries and have chosen to call Texas home more recently.

From the brave soldiers who fought in the Texas Revolution to the civil rights activists like Cesar Chavez, cultural icons like Selena, and leaders of all types in our communities, generations of Latino Americans have shaped our country as it is today. But, as I suggested a moment ago, many Americans simply aren't aware of the vast contributions made by these men and women who have come before us, and one critical way we can right this wrong is by providing a home for their stories in the Nation's Capital.

I have heard somebody suggest that we don't need a separate museum for different racial groups and ethnic groups or the like, but this is far more important than that because the story of American Latinos is the story of America itself. Many people simply aren't familiar with the vast contributions they have made.

This particular effort has been underway for more than 25 years. Nothing happens very quickly, particularly when it comes to establishing a new museum like this, but we are just two steps away, and I hope the Senate can take one big step this afternoon by passing this bipartisan legislation and sending it to the President's desk for his signature.

I know there are some of our colleagues who have concerns about the museum's location, and I can assure them that Congress will have a voice in the site of this museum. But before construction can begin, congressional committees will be consulted on site selection as laid out in the bill and I believe the colloquy that will be made a part of this record.

The Smithsonian Board of Regents, which will select the site, is chaired by the Supreme Court Chief Justice and comprises multiple Members of Congress, including three sitting Senators and the Vice President. The Congress will also need to appropriate funds to supplement the private fundraising that will help finance this museum. The appropriation requirement will be a de facto ratification or rejection of the site selected by the Smithsonian Board of Regents. So there is going to be a lot of input in that decision. We are not making that decision here today. And I believe there need to be open lines of communication between Members of Congress and the Smithsonian Board of Regents as they undertake this significant project.

It has been estimated that if we pass this bill today, the doors to a new museum will not open for at least a decade, so I am eager to get the process moving.

The National Museum of the American Latino will honor and preserve the stories of Latinos throughout American history so generations can view a more accurate and more complete history of the contributions made by these great Americans, and I hope the Senate will advance this critical legislation today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I have come to the floor today and will shortly ask for unanimous consent on H.R. 2420, the National Museum for the American Latino Act.

Let me just thank my colleague, the senior Senator from Texas, Mr. CORNYN, who has been a great partner throughout this entire process, a strong advocate who helped us navigate some of the challenges we have had along the way. I am also thrilled to be on the floor with Senator COLLINS, who will shortly make a motion on the Women's History Museum, which I strongly support, and I appreciate her support for the American Latino Museum.

Today the Senate stands at the precipice of history. We have before us an opportunity to set in motion a process that will eventually culminate in the establishment of a national museum devoted to the history, struggles, and achievements of Latinos and Latinas in the United States. This is long overdue.

Some colleagues say: Well, why do we need another museum? Well, it was in 1994 when the Smithsonian Task Force on Latino Issues published its report entitled ''Willful Neglect''—a report acknowledging the Institution's own glaring omission of Hispanic history and culture.

This is what the report found:

> The Smithsonian Institution, the largest museum complex in the world, displays a pattern of willful neglect towards . . . Latinos in the United States. Because of both indigenous roots and Spanish heritage, Latinos predate the British in the [United States]. They have contributed significantly to every phase and aspect of American history and culture. Yet the institution almost entirely excludes and ignores Latinos in nearly every aspect of its operations.
>
> Latinos are absent from positions of power and authority within the institution, which helps to perpetuate the exclusion of Latino history and culture from the museum's collections, exhibitions, and programs.

The report also acknowledges how the Smithsonian's exclusion of Latinos and Latinas has not only harmed Hispanic Americans but all Americans.

The report says:

> The failure of the Smithsonian to reflect and represent Hispanic contributions is twice damaging. It denies Latinos their right to feel recognized and valued as part of the country's heritage. At the same time, it perpetuates among the general population the inaccurate belief that Latinos have contributed little to our country's development or culture, rather than reflecting the multicultural history . . . of the United States.

Without treading into politics, I think it is important we acknowledge that this misconception is alive and well today. In recent years, we have heard Hispanic Americans, immigrants, and their families used as scapegoats for every economic ill facing our Nation. We have witnessed the rise of nativism and xenophobia. We have seen these hateful statements propel acts of horrific violence like the tragic El Paso shooting.

But we Latinos and Latinas are not invaders. We have been here from the beginning. The oldest city in America, well before Pilgrims and Jamestown, is St. Augustine, FL, over 500 years ago founded by a gentleman named Pedro Aviles de Menendez. And our stories must be told.

Who here does not emerge from the Smithsonian Museum of American History more informed about the many movements that have shaped our country? Who does not emerge from the Museum of the American Indian more aware of Native American history and more appreciative of their cultures? Who does not emerge from the Museum of African American History inspired by the perseverance and the power of our Black community? We all do. The Smithsonian Institution is truly a national treasure.

But I am not White or Black or Native American. I am Latino. I am one in five Americans today. My grandchildren are one in four schoolchildren today. But when we walk through the National Mall—or should I say when anyone walks through the National Mall, no one is inspired by the story of Latinos and Latinas in this country because that story is not being told.

Walk outside these halls and ask someone who Bernardo de Galvez was, the former Governor of Louisiana before Louisiana was a State, who led an all-Spanish division against the British as they were approaching Washington and helped in the Revolutionary War? The Congress gave him U.S. citizenship. His portrait was supposed to be hung in the Congress of the United States, so much was the battle that he

led. His portrait finally hangs in the Senate Foreign Relations room.

Go to Farragut metro station and ask a rider who it was named for. David Farragut, the Spanish captain who led during the Civil War on behalf of the Union.

Visit a school and ask a child where the first settlers to this country hailed from. They won't say St. Augustine, FL.

I guarantee these questions will go unanswered because the history of the American Latino remains unknown.

It has been nearly 30 years since the Smithsonian Task Force on Latino Issues recommended that the Institution immediately begin laying ''the groundwork needed to assure the establishment of one or more museums portraying the historical, cultural, and artistic achievements of U.S. Hispanics.'' Thirty years. For nearly 30 years, those words have echoed on empty ears. My friends, that silence and inaction must end today.

We Hispanics are not a monolithic community. Our families are as diverse as they come. We are Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban, Colombian, Spanish, Salvadoran, and more. We are Brown, Black, and White, left and right, and everywhere in between. Some of our ancestors settled here long before the dawn of our Republic; others arrived alongside generations of immigrants around the world searching for freedom and opportunity. Some of us grew up along our southern border in cities and communities born out of blended cultures.

Some of us, myself included, are first-generation Americans. Our parents courageously uprooted their lives and came to this country with no connection at all in order to give their children a brighter future.

Indeed, that story of hard work and boundless optimism is the common thread that runs throughout our Latino community—all 60 million of us living in the United States. And I would argue that story is as American as they come.

So let us ensure that the story is told right here in the Nation's Capital, where it belongs. Let us pass H.R. 2420. Let us ensure that someday in the near future, Latino and Latina children and other children who walk through our National Mall will no longer wonder why the story of their families are missing. I know I cannot wait for the day that I can take my granddaughters to the National Museum of the American Latino.

So it has been a long and winding road for this bill, one which I hope will complete its path today in Congress. This has already been passed by the House of Representatives by voice vote—no opposition. This passed the Rules Committee in a unanimous voice vote.

Now, we have been asked to make some changes to accommodate my colleague, the chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and while I personally do not believe that these changes are fair to the Latino community or required or necessary for the bill, I am committed to making them to pass this bill and finally moving one step closer to the construction of the museum.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 600, H.R. 2420. I ask unanimous consent that the Murkowski amendment at the desk be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, 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. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I want to thank my friend and colleague, the Senator from New Jersey, for bringing this issue to the floor today.

Cultural programs may represent and do, in fact, represent a tiny fraction of all Federal spending, but they are magnified many times over by virtue of their symbolic and their substantive impact. Culture is, of course, upstream from politics. It is more important, and it is more deserving of more of our attention.

For that reason, the Smithsonian Institution is more than just another line item in our Federal budget. It is one of the great cultural triumphs of our Republic. From the moment of our founding, the United States has faced an almost unique problem in history. How do we turn our huge Nation's cultural, religious, ethnic, and regional differences from a potential weakness into a real strength? The way our Nation has always achieved this is by creating institutions that unite Americans around shared interests and the mystic chords of collective memory.

The Constitution, the Senate itself, our free enterprise economy, our Armed Forces and public schools, Federalism, localism, the First Amendment, and even March Madness all fit this bill. They have the power to harness our individual and community differences to the common good of the whole Nation.

Now, the Smithsonian Institution does the exact same thing. It winds all the myriad strands of America's triumphant history into one imperfect but heroic story. Americans of every age, race, creed, and background come to Washington from all over the country to visit the Smithsonian museums—Natural History, American History, Air and Space, American Art, the National Zoo. Within the walls of the Smithsonian museum, just like at the National Gallery of Art or the great memorials that dot this city, there is no us and them. There is only us.

So my objection to the creation of a new Smithsonian museum or series of museums based on group identity—what Theodore Roosevelt called ''hyphenated Americanism''—is not a matter of budgetary or legislative technicalities. It is a matter of national unity and cultural inclusion.

Now, we have seen in recent years what happens when we indulge the cultural and identity balkanization of our national community. The so-called critical theory undergirding this movement does not celebrate diversity. It weaponizes diversity. It sharpens all those hyphens into so many knives and daggers. It has turned our college campuses into grievance pageants and loosed Orwellian mobs to cancel anyone daring to express an original thought. Especially at the end of such a fraying, fracturing year, Congress should not splinter one of the national institutional cornerstones of our distinct national identity.

The Smithsonian Institution should not have an exclusive Museum of American Latino History or a Museum of Women's History or a Museum of Americans Men's History or Mormon History or Asian American History or Catholic History. American history is an inclusive story that should unite us—us.

The Senator from New Jersey is absolutely right that the history of American Latinos is a vital part of America's history. So, of course, is the history of American women, who have written more than half of the American story, going all the way back to Plymouth Rock. Their stories are our stories, and they are stories that emphatically should be told by the Smithsonian Institution at the Museum of American History, period. No hyphen.

Now, the Senator from New Jersey is well aware of my stingy views on Federal spending, but if American Latino or American women's history are being underrepresented at the Museum of American History, that is a problem, and that is the problem that we should address here. I will happily work with him or anyone else to correct those problems, even if it means more money, more exhibits, new floors or wings.

I understand what my colleagues are trying to do and why, and I respect what they are trying to do, and I even share their interest in ensuring that these stories are told. But the last thing we need is to further divide an already divided Nation with an array of segregated, separate-but-equal museums for hyphenated identity groups.

At this moment in the history of our diverse Nation, we need our Federal Government and the Smithsonian Institution itself to pull us closer together and not further apart. On that basis, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, 60 million Latinos in this country are watching tonight because this is a much expected moment—Univision, Telemundo, affiliates across the country, national organizations, and others. They have been waiting for this moment, a moment that everybody in the

Congress of the United States agrees to except for one colleague. The House of Representatives passed this on voice. The Rules Committee passed it on voice in a bipartisan manner. And tonight, one colleague stands in the way—one Republican colleague from Utah stands in the way of the hopes and dreams and aspirations of seeing Americans of Latino descent having their dreams fulfilled in being recognized—just being recognized.

Now, the Smithsonian is a collection of museums. Let's be honest with that. Did we need an Air and Space Museum? Do we need a museum of the Native Americans? Did we need an African-American Museum? I would say yes to all of them because they are part of the mosaic. They are brought together under the rubric of the single most significant cultural institution in the Nation, which is the Smithsonian.

I don't know if these arguments were made against the Native Americans. I don't know if these arguments were made against African Americans, but I don't see them as being separate and apart. I see them as part of the collective history mosaic that is coming together under the Smithsonian. More than half of the Nation's population are women. Are we to deny them that their history in our country is not being told? It is not. It is beyond Betsy Ross, who I appreciate very much.

And, talk about funding, this bill requires that 50 percent of all the funding be coming from private sources. So we will fuel the development of programming, as well as the physical structure, as well as the other elements by the community and communities who want to see this become a reality.

It is 30 years of willful neglect. Nobody cared, nobody made any effort, and nobody did anything about it. And in the one chance we have, since this has been a 20-plus year journey to try to make this museum possible, one Republican colleague stands in the way. One Republican colleague stands in the way. It is pretty outrageous. It is pretty outrageous.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I want to be clear about something. All racial, ethnic, religious groups in America are worthy of celebration, even to the extent of having their own museums. Indeed, many of them already do—in many instances, institutions and museums that are not part of or funded by the Federal Government in whole or in part. If we had more museums and fewer tweets, America would certainly be better off.

This isn't about whether such museums should exist or not. This is about the Smithsonian Institution, which is itself federally funded. I understand that they also raise a significant portion of their money, but there is a brand that comes along with the Smithsonian Institution and a lot of money that is taken from the American people in the form of tax revenue. So, as a result of that, the Smithsonian Institution has a unique role and responsibility in our culture and as a repository and teller of America's national story.

Now, it is absolutely true that African Americans and American Indians have a unique place in that story in that they were rather uniquely, deliberately, and systemically excluded from it. Unlike many other groups, they were persecuted and they were essentially written out of our national story and even had their own stories virtually erased—not simply by our culture or evolving values, but by that very same government, this same Federal Government.

It is, therefore, uniquely appropriate that the Federal Government provide the funding to recover and tell those communities' specific stories today at dedicated museums in the specific context of having been so long excluded from our national community and our national story.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I just have to say: We have been systemically excluded. We, who founded the oldest city in America before there was a United States of America; we, who ultimately were used as farm workers and discriminated against in the Bracero program; we, who were discriminated against when we voluntarily joined the Armed Forces of the United States to defend the Nation—we have been systematically excluded, not because this Senator said so but because the Smithsonian itself said so.

And yet we are supposed to entrust the willful neglect that has taken place for more than three decades—taken place longer but acknowledged for three decades. Oh, no, we are somehow not systemically excluded. Believe me, we have been, and the only righteous way to end that exclusion is to pass this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, if the Smithsonian Institution in its report in 1994 in fact acknowledged that it systematically excluded the stories of any one segment in American society, I struggle to understand why the only response to that has to be a separate, siloed museum. Why not direct them, when telling our national story at the National Museum of American History, to tell that story there. If we have to expand it, we will do that. If we have to add more floor space and more staff and more research, let's do that. But the fact that they have identified their own failure over time doesn't mean that they themselves should then get to decide that we have a separate, siloed museum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, before I give my remarks, I want to strongly associate myself with the comments that have been made this evening by my colleagues from Texas and New Jersey—Senator CORNYN and Senator MENENDEZ—in support of a museum to celebrate and commemorate the achievements of Latinos in our country.

I could not help but wonder, as I heard the comments of my colleague from Utah, whether he also tried to block the museum celebrating and telling the history of African Americans, that museum which is so popular on the Mall. I wondered whether he tried to block also the creation of the museum that tells the story of Native Americans.

I am convinced that if this bill, which has just been described by my two colleagues, were brought to a vote on the Senate floor, it would pass, not unanimously, that is clear, but with a very strong vote. And it seems wrong that one Senator can block consideration of a bill that would have overwhelming support by a majority of this body.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 959

So, Madam President, I rise today on behalf of myself and the Senator from California, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, to urge the Senate to take the important step of passing our legislation to establish a long overdue women's history museum in our Nation's Capital.

This is an issue that I have been working on since 2003, when I introduced the first bill to tell the story of more than half of our population, of the contributions of American women to our country in every field: government, business, medicine, law, literature, sports, entertainment, the arts, the military, the family.

Telling the history of American women matters, and a museum recognizing our achievements and experiences has long been a goal of many of the women and men who serve in this Chamber.

Following 18 months of study by an independent, bipartisan commission established by Congress, the Commission unanimously concluded: ''America needs and deserves a physical national museum dedicated to showcasing the historical experiences and impact of women in the country.'' I agree wholeheartedly with the Commission's unanimous conclusion.

This year, we commemorate the 100th anniversary of suffrage for women in this country and the decades-long fight for women's equality at the ballot box. It is extraordinary to me that just 100 years ago, not every woman in this country was allowed to vote in every State. That is not that long ago. That story is one of the stories that needs to be told.

Amid the celebrations of this historic year, I can think of no better way to tell the story of American women to inspire those young girls and young boys who come to Washington to tour all the wonderful museums that are part of the Smithsonian than to create

a museum of American women's history so that they can better understand the contributions of American women to the development of our Nation and its proud history.

As with the legislation that would establish a museum celebrating and commemorating the history of Latino and Latina Americans, this legislation has passed the House by an overwhelming margin. Surely, we ought to be able to take it up and pass it here too.

So, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 599, S. 959. I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment be withdrawn, the Murkowski amendment at the desk be agreed to, and the bill, as amended, 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. Is there objection?

Mr. LEE. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I think this is a sad moment. I had hoped that we could proceed with both of these bills and pass them before the end of this year.

Surely, in a year where we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage, this is the time, this is the moment to finally pass the legislation unanimously recommended by an independent commission to establish an American women's history museum in our Nation's Capital. I regret that that will not occur this evening, but we will not give up the fight.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I would like to follow up on the comments you have just shared with your support for a women's history museum and also to the comments made by the Senator from New Jersey and also the Senator from Texas regarding the American-Latino museum.

I am privileged to serve as the chairman of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. As part of that subcommittee, we have oversight of the Smithsonian, and it is an incredibly rewarding part of the job that I have to do with oversight. So I am very well aware of these national treasures, what they contribute to the education, to the dialogue, and to just the motivation that comes when we know and understand more about our own country and about the people who make up this extraordinary mosaic called America and how we recognize and how we celebrate those contributions, how we acknowledge the challenges that women have faced along the way, African Americans or Latinos, as they have truly been extraordinary participants in this American society.

I also recognize that our Smithsonians don't come free. They don't come cheap, as the Senator from Utah noted. The Smithsonians are funded with significant Federal taxpayer dollars, so we are required to show a level of—exercise with how we move forward. And we have been extraordinarily judicious.

I think, as the Presiding Officer noted in her comments, when the discussion of a women's history museum first came about, it was not just a flash-in-the-pan idea. It was something that had germinated a long period of time. It goes to a commission. There are a series of steps and approvals that they must go through along the way. So the path that we have taken has led us to the point today where there has been a request made to be able to advance both of these significant recognitions to American Latina and American women by way of additional Smithsonian facilities.

I support both of those, just as I have supported our Smithsonians as new ones have come online—the African-American museum most recently—or the renovations that have been underway for a period.

I also recognize that the effort tonight made by both the Presiding Officer, as prime sponsor of the American women's history museum, and incorporating an amendment that I had requested that ensures that as we are looking to sites for these significant facilities, that we are doing so with a level of a cooperation. I don't think anybody wants to be in a situation where the Smithsonian would effectively be able to tell, whether it is the Department of Agriculture or the U.S. Forest Service, we want your building. That is not how the process works.

So the amendments that were incorporated in both of these measures that were before us today, I think, was an important one, I think was a significant one.

Some may have heard that LISA MURKOWSKI was not supporting these museums—far from it. What I wanted to ensure is that we have a good, sound process for where we site these extraordinarily—extraordinarily important facilities.

My hope is that we will resolve this impasse because the contributions, whether they be from women over the decades, the Latina community, Latino community, over the decades and the centuries, that there be facilities that appropriately recognize and celebrate them.

With that, I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

TRIBUTE TO LAMAR ALEXANDER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, when LAMAR ALEXANDER came to the Senate in 2002, he brought with him a wealth of experience and years of service to the State of Tennessee. As a Senator, he has remained a strong advocate for his State and its citizens, and as a colleague, he has shown a willingness to work across the aisle for the good of his constituents, of the Senate, and of the Nation. Our partnership is one that I will miss when he leaves the Senate.

Throughout his career—as Governor of Tennessee, as president of the University of Tennessee, and as the Secretary of Education for President George H.W. Bush, and as a U.S. Senator—LAMAR has dedicated himself to improving education quality and access for Tennesseans and all Americans alike. He has continued and advanced that work as the chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. Senator ALEXANDER has a proven record of working across the aisle to develop solutions to our country's most pressing healthcare and education challenge, and we know there are many.

I have had the privilege of working with Senator ALEXANDER for many years on the Appropriations Committee. Senator ALEXANDER has been a trusted partner on the committee, striving to reach bipartisan compromise, which I believe has long been the hallmark of the Appropriations Committee. His work as the current chairman of the Energy and Water Subcommittee has helped make investments in clean and renewable energy initiatives, which in turn have brought about economic development and investment. I have long appreciated the work he has done to support agencies, programs, and initiatives that improve the lives of all Americans.

In a body as divisive as the Senate has come to be in recent times, LAMAR has become more than a fellow Senator; he has become a friend. LAMAR, Honey, and their children and grandchildren deserve all the best that the coming years have in store for them.

TRIBUTE TO MIKE ENZI

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, one factor that helps make someone a strong representative of their constituents is the body of experience they bring to their job. MIKE ENZI has spent his life representing his constituents, first as a mayor, then in the Wyoming Senate, and ultimately in the U.S. Senate, a post to which the people of Wyoming have elected and reelected him four times.

While our States are quite different geographically, Wyoming, like Vermont, is State of close-knit communities, and it is easy to see how deeply Senator ENZI cares for his fellow Wyomingites and how firmly he prioritizes his constituents. As a Senator, he has worked to expand resources for vocational and technical education programs nationwide, and he has worked to protect and create jobs in Wyoming and across the United States as a strong advocate for domestic energy production from a diverse array of sources.

MIKE has been a longtime member and top Republican of the Senate Budget Committee and, before that, of the