

Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Agency, when she comes before the Judiciary Committee next month.

We all understand that the ability of the Federal Government to provide any assistance is increasingly challenged in light of our burgeoning prison population, which is largely driven by inflexible and unfair drug mandatory minimums. Federal prison and detention costs have risen to account for nearly one-third of the budget for the Department of Justice. This unsustainable growth in our prison costs siphons resources from other crucial law enforcement priorities every year. It is vital that Congress pass our bipartisan Smarter Sentencing Act, which would make modest reductions to mandatory minimums for non-violent drug offenses and help preserve funding for assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies and to victim services.

Addiction to heroin and other opioids is a community problem, demanding community solutions. I can report that Vermonters have stepped up to this challenge. Obstacles remain, but Vermont communities have rallied to develop lasting solutions and get ahead of addiction. After seeing this commitment firsthand, I left Rutland hopeful. And very proud.

DEVELOPING EUROPE'S ENERGY SUPPLIES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I wish to call for new aid to Eastern Europe to strengthen our allies in the face of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Some of my colleagues have suggested that we can do this by immediately increasing our export of domestically produced and processed liquefied natural gas. I have been cautiously optimistic on the domestic production of this energy source, relying heavily on the need for the environmental regulation of such activities. But in the case of Eastern Europe there is little that we can do domestically to quickly help their situation.

For more than a century, America's real power has been exporting the keys to economic growth and security. Therefore, it is time to do something real to bolster Europe's energy security by helping them develop Eastern Europe's substantial natural gas reserves and reduce the leverage Russia has over its energy dependent neighbors.

The most powerful tool the United States can give Eastern Europe is not exported natural gas that will not get to Europe for years, if ever. It is empowering our European allies to develop their own energy resources, like the major shale gas deposits in Poland.

It is clear that energy—and natural gas in particular—is at the very heart of Russia's influence over that part of the world. Europe is dependent on Russia for nearly one-third of its natural gas. And while countries in Western Europe have had some success in diver-

sifying their energy supplies, as former State Department Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs David Goldwyn testified yesterday, Eastern Europe is still heavily dependent upon Russia for energy.

Russia is not above using that dependence as a hammer and has been eager to remind us of that fact. For instance, Moscow shut off the gas lines in 2006 and again in the winter of 2009, leaving millions temporarily without heat. In 2013, when the country of Moldova sought to pursue stronger ties with Europe, Russia's deputy prime minister issued a barely veiled threat to the Moldovans, saying "we hope you will not freeze."

As I noted, some have suggested the answer to this problem is to automatically approve natural gas exports from the United States.

This position simply ignores the facts about how the gas market actually works.

U.S. LNG facilities are not slated to come online until the end of next year, at the earliest, while any new approvals would not provide any natural gas exports for at least several years. Further, unless Congress directed exports to go to Ukraine, the gas would go to the country paying the highest price, which would likely be in Asia.

I support the Energy Department's current, measured process for considering export requests. The Energy Department has already approved more than 9 billion cubic feet per day of exports, which exceeds what most analysts believe is the current international market for U.S. natural gas. It is helping our European allies bolster their energy security by developing the major shale gas deposits in Poland and elsewhere.

United States entrepreneurs triggered the shale revolution with a combination of innovation and technical know-how. This created tens of thousands of jobs and produced stable energy supplies that are 50 percent cleaner than traditional fossil fuels. It helped us with our energy security and it can do the same for Europe.

That is exactly what we should be doing to help NATO allies that are justifiably worried following Russia's illegal actions in Ukraine.

So what I am proposing today is to increase funding for a State Department program that helps spur natural gas development abroad. My common-sense amendment would direct \$10 million within the Economic Support Fund toward the Unconventional Gas Technical Engagement Program to help Eastern European countries develop the regulations and technical expertise they need to access their own gas.

Let me be clear—this assistance would go to countries, like Poland, that have asked for American help to harness their own gas reserves. I am aware that Europe is having its own debate about shale gas, and this amendment would not force any nation

to participate. In doing so, it will help our European allies throw off the yoke of dependence on Russian gas.

I want to be clear that this amendment cannot free Eastern Europe from Russian influence. Russia has other ways of bullying its neighbors economically. Moscow temporarily banned imports from Ukraine, for example, and it also banned imports of Moldovan wine—a very significant part of Moldova's economy.

This is clearly only one step of many needed to send a message to President Putin. But as the former chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee I know that a stable energy supply is the lifeblood of any economy and a very important component to a secure nation.

I believe there is bipartisan support for America to give our allies the tools they need to become more secure and less dependent on the whims of Mr. Putin.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DR. MURRAY W. WEST

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to honor Baltimore physician Murray W. West, a valued member of Maryland's medical community. At the end of this month, Dr. West, a family physician, will retire from clinical practice after more than 30 years.

Born in Washington, DC, on September 11, 1954, Murray West moved to Philadelphia at age 10. From 1975 to 1976, he attended Queen Mary College in London, and he was awarded a bachelor of science degree from Antioch College in 1977.

A 1981 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Dr. West completed his residency in family practice at the Georgetown University Department of Family Medicine here in Washington, DC. After 3 years with the Indian Health Service in Yuma, AZ, Dr. West moved to Maryland, where he earned a master of public health degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in 1993. Since 1986, he has treated patients exclusively at nonprofit health centers in our State—Arundel Village, Washington Village, Peoples Community, and the Belair-Edison Family Health Center, where he served as medical director from 2001 until 2007.

On Thursday, March 28, family members, colleagues, and friends will gather to celebrate this committed practitioner whose career epitomizes dedication to public health and quality care. I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in wishing Dr. West all the best in his retirement.●

TRIBUTE TO CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT SAMUEL L. JOHNSON

• Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I wish to recognize and pay tribute to

CMSAF Samuel L. Johnson on the occasion of his retirement from the U.S. Air Force.

Chief Johnson has given much to this Nation through his dedicated and selfless service. His Air Force career started in the great State of Georgia on December 21, 1984, following his graduation from Echols County High School near Statenville. When Chief Johnson began his career, he got exactly what he asked for—the ability to see the world. His first assignment took him to the United Kingdom, where he laid the foundation for a tremendous career as a security policeman. His career would take him to the ICBM fields of Wyoming, followed by his first tour in the Republic of Korea. Chief Johnson would end up in the United Kingdom once again, then to the Emerald Coast of Florida, followed by his first tour in Texas. He would spend a couple of years in our Nation's Capital before heading back to Korea. He would then return to the States, landing himself his first tour in south Georgia. Long from ending his travels, Chief Johnson would take one more assignment to Texas, followed by a year in Qatar. Finally, Chief Johnson landed back in south Georgia for his second assignment there, which would be his last assignment in the Air Force. During his career, along with all of the aforementioned permanent duty station changes, Chief Johnson deployed in support of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn. Chief Johnson sewed on his final stripe, earning him a spot in the top 1 percent of all enlisted members of the military allowed by law, on September 1, 2009.

Chief Johnson is the recipient of the following major medals and decorations for his service and accomplishments: two Bronze Star Medals, five Meritorious Service Medals, four Air Force Commendation Medals, four Air Force Achievement Medals, the Air Force Combat Action Medal, the Air Force Combat Readiness Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Korean Defense Service Medal, and the NATO Medal.

Throughout his distinguished career he has represented our country and the Air Force with dignity and honor. On behalf of the Senate and the United States of America, I thank CMSAF Samuel L. Johnson for his service and sacrifices over the past 30 years. I wish him Godspeed and continued happiness as he starts a new chapter in his life.●

LIHEAP ACTION DAY

● Mr. REED. Mr. President, today is National LIHEAP Action Day. Advocates from many different States are here to make the case for the Low In-

come Home Energy Assistance Program, known as LIHEAP. This important initiative helps low-income Rhode Island families and millions of vulnerable Americans across the country pay their energy bills. Simply put, access to affordable home energy is a matter of health and safety for many low-income households, children, and seniors.

In Rhode Island this year, LIHEAP provided roughly \$24 million, which allowed the State to deliver assistance to 27,700 households. However, despite bipartisan efforts that I have led with my colleague from Maine, Senator COLLINS, to press for robust support for the program, funding reductions in 2011 and 2012, along with sequester cuts, have led to a decrease in the number of households served. As a result, nearly 1.5 million vulnerable households have lost access to this vital lifeline.

With one of the harshest winters in decades and the high cost of energy experienced in some regions of the country, including high natural gas and heating oil prices in New England, the importance of the LIHEAP program is even more pronounced. According to the Energy Information Administration, the average cost of home heating this winter will rise to nearly \$1,000 on average, a 6 percent increase over last year. These cost increases are happening at a time when households are receiving lower benefits. The average LIHEAP payments have been reduced by more than \$100 since 2010, dropping from \$520 in fiscal year 2010 to \$406 in fiscal year 2013.

I urge my colleagues to recognize the need to provide access to affordable home energy for the most vulnerable households in our States and join me in support of LIHEAP. This assistance is an indispensable lifeline, helping to ensure that recipients do not have to choose between paying their energy bills and affording other basic necessities such as food and medicine.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:05 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2824. An act to amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to stop the ongoing waste by the Department of the Interior of taxpayer resources and implement the final rule on excess spoil, mining waste, and buffers for perennial and intermittent streams, and for other purposes.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 5:06 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 4275. An act to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the Internal Revenue

Code of 1986 to provide for cooperative and small employer charity pension plans.

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

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 2157. A bill to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to repeal the Medicare sustainable growth rate and to improve Medicare and Medicaid payments, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4983. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Atlantic Herring Fishery; Amendment 5" (RIN 0648-AY47) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 7, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4984. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area; Amendment 102" (RIN 0648-BD03) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 7, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4985. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska; Amendment 95 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish" (RIN 0648-BC39) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 12, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4986. A communication from the Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone off Alaska; Atka Mackerel in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area" (RIN0648-XD125) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 7, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4987. A communication from the Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic; Trip Limit Reduction" (RIN0648-XD134) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 7, 2014; to the