United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161 WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2015 No. 63

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, enthroned above all other powers, thank You for the masterpiece of another day. Lord, our hearts ache because of the pain in our world. We see the anger, the violence, the death, the tears, and the despair. Forgive us when we forget that You are still in control of our planet and that the hearts of humanity are in Your hands. Lord, help us to remember that Your power is far above any conceivable command, authority or control. As our lawmakers strive to contribute to peace in our time, bless those who support them in their work. Help us all to trust You without wavering.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, we were reminded yet again of Iran's determination to use every element of national power to expand its sphere of influence and undermine international law.

What we saw in the Strait of Hormuz simply underlines the danger posed by Iran, along with the pressing need for a clear-eyed understanding of the Iranian threat.

It is appropriate, then, that the Senate will resume consideration of the bipartisan Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act later today. I encourage Members to come to the floor, offer amendments, and work with the floor managers to schedule votes.

We have voted on one amendment to this bipartisan bill. I am sure we will take votes on several more significant amendments before the week is over.

WELCOMING THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, later this morning we will welcome an important friend of the United States to the Capitol, Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan.

I am looking forward to hearing what he has to say. I know many of my colleagues feel the same way because Prime Minister Abe doesn't just lead one of the most important economies and countries in the Asia-Pacific region, he leads one of the most important countries and economies in the entire world. Abe has proposed to tackle some tough structural problems other leaders in his country might not touch, but he knows the Japanese people can be persuaded to reward their leaders for taking risks.

Abe previously served in the Cabinet of a free-market Prime Minister who grabbed hold of economic third rails of Japanese politics and then rolled to a landslide victory when others counted him out. Perhaps that is why Abe feels liberated to pursue new initiatives of his own.

On the domestic side, Abe has proposed structural reforms. On the international front, Abe has worked to enhance the role and influence of democratic nations, such as the two of us, in the Asia-Pacific. Just this week in Washington, he signed important agreements with the United States on both cyber security and defense.

This all serves to underline the enduring importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance. It also reminds us that the Obama administration must do its part, too, by investing in the platforms and capabilities needed to make its announced pivot to Asia real. That is the only way to both bolster democratic nations such as Japan in the region, while also effectively countering China's aggressive encroachment upon the territorial and navigational rights of its neighbors.

Trade is another way to advance our common values and strengthen our national security and our economy. For years, Japan and the United States had a difficult trading relationship. Today, though, the U.S. and Japanese negotiators actually appear close to reaching an agreement that could significantly lower existing barriers to trade, benefiting both of our economies.

That breakthrough is being negotiated as part of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade agreement between Pacific nations such as Japan, Australia, and the United States. That would help ensure the region and the world play by fair rules, instead of ceding the fields to an increasingly aggressive China.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership could also, according to one estimate, support up to nearly one-quarter of a million new jobs in the United States, including more than 50,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector alone. But American and Kentucky workers and farmers will never be able to reap the rewards of selling more ''Made in America'' goods to the Pacific until Congress passes a bipartisan trade promotion bill.

Passing that bipartisan legislation is key to enhancing Congress's role in the trade process, while simultaneously ensuring Presidents of either party—because this is a 6-year TPA, it will apply

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

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to the next President—have the tools they need to secure a strong and enforceable trade agreement for American workers.

The bill recently passed the Finance Committee on an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, and I intend to take it up after we complete action on the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act.

But, for now, let me just say that Congress is pleased to have the Prime Minister join us today. We thank Prime Minister Abe and his country for their enduring friendship.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am grateful for the work done yesterday and during the entire process of working toward an agreement on the important Iran legislation.

Senators CORKER and CARDIN have done a magnificent job. They are both good managers. I would suggest everyone who is concerned about amendments should come and talk to the two managers before they lay down their amendments.

There is a process for moving amendments forward. It has been very well articulated by both Senator CARDIN and Senator CORKER, so we know what rules we can move under today.

We know there are difficult issues with this bill—and those are some of the things we do here, work on difficult issues—not always but some of the time.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Senator MCCONNELL and I love our jobs. We realize how important things are that we work on, but once in a while we take a minute and talk about one of our hobbies and that is watching baseball.

Because we are in Washington and have been for some time, we have been focused recently on the Nationals. They started off in a very bad fashion, losing, now—last night, they were in the process of a six-game losing streak. They brought in a pitcher because their star was injured. He gave up nine runs in two innings. So I think we were both fairly well going to acknowledge they were going to lose their seventh straight, but they won the game 13 to 12.

I admire the tenacity of the Republican leader because he watched the end of the game. I couldn't do that. I tried, but at the beginning of the ninth inning—they had given up more runs earlier—they were behind with one out, and I said: I am going to go to bed. I was surprised when I got up this morning and they had won. So we had a good laugh talking about the game today that they had won. As I indicated, I am sorry I didn't get to watch the last of the game. I decided I didn't have enough faith in the team, and I went to bed.

THE BUDGET

Mr. REID. Mr. President, budgets should be about reality, not ideology. The reality of the budget today is that our middle class is being pushed to the edge of extinction, and that is the truth, while there is an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor. As I have said—I will continue to say—the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting much poorer. But perhaps the most brutal reality is that Congress is not doing its job, and the real brutal reality is that congressional Republicans don't even seem to care.

In the very near future, the Senate is expected to consider a conference report on the Republican budget resolution. It is a budget that is as irresponsible as it is immoral.

It is a budget based on the failed ideology of a political party out of touch with America's middle class, a political party that is out of touch with reality. It amounts to an all-out attack on working families, an attack designed to protect only the interests of millionaires, billionaires, and many special interests.

The Republican budget would deprive more than 16 million Americans of their health insurance. It allows big insurance companies to, once again, discriminate against women. It would cause people who have disabilities to be unable to get insurance—as it used to be before ObamaCare came into being. It threatens the coverage of hard-working Americans who lose their jobs or suffer from, as I have indicated, preexisting medical conditions.

The budget that is proposed by my Republican friends would also make deep cuts to Medicare at the expense of our Nation's seniors. It would raise taxes on working Americans by allowing the expansion of the earned-income tax credit and allows the child tax credit to simply expire, go out of existence.

It would end key supports that help young Americans afford college. At a time when student debt is higher than credit card debt—we have tried to resolve it on the Senate floor, but the Republicans vote unanimously no. They are not going to cut parents—these young men and women who have debt—any slack.

The budget they propose would undermine job training—and certainly at a time when we need it with the changing technology that creates jobs—for Americans who are simply trying to better themselves and get a good job or a better job.

Meanwhile, Republicans refuse to close a single tax loophole to reduce the deficit—not one. They will not end tax breaks for companies that send jobs overseas. They will not close loopholes for wealthy hedge fund managers. They will not do away with wasteful tax breaks for the oil and gas industry.

Once again, Republicans are attacking the middle class, and they are attacking it forcefully, while protecting the superwealthy.

The budget is just wrong. It is also dishonest.

It claims to be balanced. There is no balance in this budget. That is a word. The budget is no more balanced than the earthquakes they have had in Nepal. It claims to reach balance, but the claim is laughable, based on gimmicks and massive cuts that are left unspecified.

When you have editorials from magazines such as Forbes, a conservative magazine, denigrating the Republican budget, you know it is wrong. One of the worst aspects of this budget is it uses sequestration to undermine America's middle class, to underfund the investments needed for our security and our future.

Let's talk about sequestration for a minute, these automatic cuts. The example is the National Institutes of Health. It becomes very personal when you see these issues that face Americans—diabetes, the flu. The Presiding Officer is a physician who specializes in eyes. But the flu kills tens of thousands of people in America every year, and the NIH was on the verge of a universal vaccine for flu, any type of flu. As we know, what they do now, they try to find out what the flu is going to be, the variety of flu in a given year, and then they try to mix and match. Last year, that was effective at less than 50 percent. So if you got the flu shot—60 percent of people who got the flu shot got the flu anyway. But because of sequestration, they had to drop that. They have never gotten that money back—$1.6 billion.

I mentioned eyes. I have become very concerned about eyes in the last couple of months, and there are all kinds of programs at the NIH that could be funded much better dealing with problems such as I have.

So it is simply wrong that they are going to go forward with this sequestration. It is wrong.

Sequestration was never intended to be implemented. It was designed with cuts so deep and so stupid that Congress would never let them happen. But my Republican colleagues let them happen. Republicans recognize that sequestration poses a threat to our national security, and their budget uses a gimmick.

I am not calling it a gimmick—or at least I am not alone. We have Republicans—the junior Senator from Tennessee is talking about how he won't support the budget because he thinks there are some gimmicks in it, and many editorials have been written using that term over and over again. Their budget is not balanced, and it uses gimmicks to pretend.

They do everything in this budget to protect the Pentagon, but it doesn't

really because it is phony. They use the overseas contingency fund, which everybody knows is phony. They want to help the military. I want to help the military also. But, sadly, the Republican budget does absolutely nothing to provide similar protections for the middle class.

There is, however, some good news about the Republican budget, and it is this: The Republican budget isn't worth the paper it is written on. It is going to go nowhere. There is no chance of the budget actually being implemented. President Obama and the congressional Democrats are committed to the middle class, so we are not going to let it happen.

The administration has made it very clear that President Obama is not willing to lock in sequestration in any appropriations bill or in anything else. In a Statement of Administration Policy—the forerunner of a veto—the Obama administration said: ''The President's senior advisors would recommend that he veto . . . any legislation that implements the current Republican budget framework.'' Nor will the President accept fixes to defense without also fixing nondefense budget items. For President Obama, it is simply a matter of principle, and congressional Democrats fully agree with his principle. So the Republican budget isn't going anywhere.

If Republicans insist on moving appropriations bills based on that budget, it is a waste of their time. It will not happen. We will not let that happen. What we need is a budget that is based in reality, a budget that is fair to the middle class, fair to the American people, a budget that will only happen when Republicans abandon their extreme attacks on the poor and middle class and sit down and talk to us about the way forward.

I note that no one is seeking the floor, and I would ask that the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided in the usual form.

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

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the time be charged equally between the majority and the minority.

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about S. 615, the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. This bill establishes a process to guarantee congressional review of any agreement reached between the P5+1 and Iran.

Like everybody else here, my goal is to ensure that Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons. With that goal in mind, I have avoided supporting measures over the past 18 months that would impact the administration's ongoing negotiations. I believe it is incumbent upon us to explore every avenue of diplomacy to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

There have been suggestions that this legislation we are considering today will negatively impact the negotiations for a final agreement. To the contrary, I think this legislation will improve the chances of reaching a final accord. Most importantly, it will improve the chances that this accord will stand the test of time.

If approved, the President will have to negotiate knowing that Congress will ultimately review this agreement. That is only proper given that the terms of the agreement go far beyond—far beyond—the current administration.

In truth, Congress has always had a role here. It was the U.S. Congress that passed the sanctions that brought Iran to the negotiating table. It is only the U.S. Congress that can permanently lift the sanctions. Unfortunately, the administration would prefer to go it alone when it comes to the implementation of this agreement by using the waiver authority that was granted when these sanctions were passed.

There is no dispute that the President can lift these sanctions on a temporary basis. But since this agreement is slated to last well beyond the President's term and even the next President's term, any effective, enduring agreement has to have congressional buy-in. Let me repeat. If this legislation fails, the President will be able to sign a final agreement and have a nice signing ceremony, but an effective, enduring agreement to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon will require congressional buy-in.

We also need to recognize that we are not operating in a vacuum. Once an agreement that includes our allies is reached, the multilateral sanctions regime that has been so effective in bringing Iran to the negotiating table will be defunct. These sanctions have been effective because it has been Iran versus the West rather than Iran versus the United States. It is unreasonable to assume that such a united front can be reassembled before Iran obtains a nuclear weapon.

That is why the bill before us today is so important. It sets up a process for review by Congress of any agreement, preventing the administration from presenting Congress with a fait accompli. This legislation will not repeal any sanctions currently in place against Iran. Congress will still have to take action to lift these sanctions permanently. Its passage ensures that if Congress does repeal the sanctions, it does so because it chooses to, not because it has no other choice.

I would also like to take a moment to reflect on the process that brought this bill out of committee. Tough issues were thoughtfully worked out and compromises were made to get this bill language to a place where the bill was voted unanimously out of committee with a recorded vote. Thanks to firm commitments made by the chairman and the ranking member to keep this bill bipartisan, the White House—which for weeks had threatened to veto the bill—reversed its position just hours before the markup. This about-face was likely due to the fact that there were so many Senators on a bipartisan basis lining up to support this bill.

This legislation signals to the administration that it needs to keep Congress in mind when it negotiates. And, without poison pill amendments being added, the President will be forced to sign it.

Most importantly, I am hopeful that the passage of this bill out of committee signifies a return to a time the Foreign Relations Committee is able to work across the aisle on foreign policy matters. I realize it cannot always happen, but the ideal is when partisan politics can—as Senator Vandenberg put it—stop at the water's edge.

The reality is that given the myriad of foreign policy challenges that confront us around the globe, we do not have the luxury of partisanship, and nowhere is this more evident than with the legislation we are considering today. I hope we can come together and pass it.

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

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

JOINT MEETING OF THE TWO HOUSES—ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 10:33 a.m., took a recess subject to the call of the Chair, and the Senate, preceded by the Secretary of the Senate, Julie E. Adams; the Deputy Sergeant at Arms, James Morhard; and the Vice President of the United States, JOSEPH R. BIDEN, Jr., proceeded to the Hall of the House of Representatives to hear an address delivered by His Excellency Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan.

(The address delivered by the Prime Minister of Japan to the joint meeting of the two Houses of Congress is printed in the Proceedings of the House of Representatives in today's RECORD.)

At 12:16 p.m., the Senate, having returned to its Chamber, reassembled and was called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SASSE).

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1191, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1191) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1140, in the nature of a substitute.

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1179 (to amendment No. 1140), to require submission of all Persian text included in the agreement.

Blunt amendment No. 1155 (to amendment No. 1140), to extend the requirement for annual Department of Defense reports on the military power of Iran.

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

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

OBAMACARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today because I noticed that the minority leader, the Senator from Nevada, had some nice things to say about me on Monday in his remarks. He said that I was ''relentless'' in my ''condemnation of ObamaCare.'' Those are his words. I appreciate the minority leader's kind remarks, because he is right. As a doctor, I am relentless in my condemnation of the President's health care law, a law that has done incredible harm to so many people all across this country.

Minority Leader REID also said that he had the facts about the law. Most of those facts seemed to come from a New York Times opinion column by the renowned liberal icon Paul Krugman.

So let me share some real facts with the minority leader. The insurance plans offered in the health care exchanges are so expensive that they are a horrible deal for most Americans. That is why the President had to give out subsidies—to help hide the costs. The Congressional Budget Office said that Washington will spend $850 billion on those subsidies over the next decade. That is a fact.

According to a new study by the health research company Avalere, ObamaCare plans are extremely unpopular among people who don't get the huge subsidies to buy the plan. Only 2 percent of the people who don't qualify for subsidies have actually bought insurance through the exchanges. That is a fact. It is an alarming sign of how high the cost of ObamaCare really is.

It is not just the premiums that are sky high. This year, the average deductible for ObamaCare's silver plan is almost $3,000 for a single person and more than $6,000 for a family. Now, that is according to something called HealthPocket, which is a Web site that helps people actually compare insurance plans. That is a fact, and $6,000 is a lot of money for a hard-working family to pay for their deductible.

Now, the minority leader said that Paul Krugman's opinions should be treated like facts—not as facts but like facts—because as Senator REID said, ''this isn't some high school teacher talking about the merits of ObamaCare.'' Well, I agree on that point. High school teachers are far more likely to have had actual experience with the damage that is done by the ObamaCare health care law than has this New York Times columnist.

That is what we learned from a report at KMOX TV in St. Louis on April 23. Their report talked about the Parkway School District in Missouri. It was Senator REID who said this isn't some high school teacher. Well, this report from St. Louis said ObamaCare is forcing the school district to outsource the employment of substitute teachers. Why would they want to do that? It is in the face of a $4 million penalty for not offering health insurance to the part-time teachers. That is a fact. And those substitute teachers are real people who are being hurt by President Obama's health care law.

Here is another fact reported by Politico on Monday afternoon. This was their headline on April 27: ''Study: ACA exchange enrollees take tax hit.''

According to a new study by the tax preparers at H&R Block, almost two-thirds of people enrolled in ObamaCare exchanges had to pay back some of their subsidy with their taxes this month. The average amount people owed the IRS was $729. That is a fact. It is a big hit to a lot of families who thought they were going to get help to pay for their ObamaCare premiums. It does not even count the people who decided that the insurance was just too expensive and decided not to buy it. According to H&R Block, those people paid the IRS an average tax penalty of $178. That is a fact. It is only going to be higher next year when people sit down and fill out their taxes.

I remember another speech Senator REID gave on the floor on ObamaCare. On February 26, 2014, he said: ''Despite all that good news, there's plenty of horror stories being told.'' ''All of them are untrue.''

That was Senator REID a year ago.

Republicans had been citing—this is Senator REID—examples of people being harmed by ObamaCare, and Senator REID said that all of them were ''stories made up from whole cloth.''

Well, here is a horror story from the minority leader's home State newspaper—Nevada—very recently. This was an article from earlier this month, the Las Vegas Review-Journal, April 7. The headline was ''Past state ObamaCare sign-up glitches now haunt Nevadans at tax time.''

Here is what the article says:

How did a Reno collections agent end up in collections himself?

The answer:

He bought coverage in 2014 through the state's health insurance exchange.

According to the article:

Rick Furst is still ironing out wrinkles in a plan purchased in May through the Nevada Health Link and its contractor, Xerox. His cascade of issues has included bad coverage dates, unpaid medical bills and an incorrect tax-credit form.

This man told the Las Vegas newspaper, ''My credit was excellent, and now my credit is shot.'' His credit was excellent, and now his credit is shot. Does Senator REID think this man from his home State of Nevada made up his story out of whole cloth?

People are having their lives turned upside down by the disgraceful failure of these ObamaCare exchanges. That is a fact. It is a cruel and costly side effect of this terrible health care law. Paul Krugman of the New York Times did not talk about that fact in his opinion column in the New York Times the other day.

Another thing he and the minority leader are not talking about is the fact that many Americans now have less access to actual care because of the health care law. Well, they should have known about that fact; it was reported right there in the New York Times itself on Sunday, February 8, 2015, with the headline ''Insured, but not covered.'' ''New policies have . . . many

Americans scrambling.'' The article talks about the narrow networks many insurance plans had to create. This was to try to meet the requirements of ObamaCare without the premiums going even higher.

The story starts off by talking about one woman in New York City. Her name is Karen Pineman. First, she lost her existing health insurance policy because it did not meet all of the mandates President Obama said a health insurance policy had to include.

The President calls those benefits ''essential benefits.'' I call them excessive benefits. It is much more insurance than many people need, want, or can afford.

The article in the New York Times says that she accepted that she would have to pay a higher premium for a plan with a narrower network of providers and no out-of-network coverage. According to the article, she also accepted the fact that she would have to pay out of her own pocket to see her primary care physician because her doctor was not part of the narrow network that was now covered under her insurance. Well, she even accepted having copays of nearly $1,800 to put a cast on her ankle after she broke it playing tennis. Finally, the article says, her frustration bubbled over when she tried to arrange a followup visit with her orthopedic surgeon. The nearest doctor available in her network who treated ankle problems was in Stamford, CT. Remember, she lives in New York City.

This woman finally had enough. She told the newspaper: It is ridiculous. Didn't they notice that I was in another State?

Well, that woman, as reported in the New York Times, did not make up her story out of whole cloth. Those kinds of narrow networks are a fact under President Obama's law.

It is a fact that there are people who now have coverage and can't have access to care. There is a difference between coverage and care. You do not have to take my world for it; it is right there in the New York Times.

So the minority leader is correct. Republicans have been relentless in condemning the horrifying costs of the President's health care law. Republicans have been relentless in condemning the intolerable damage the health care law has done to people's access to health care.

Republicans will continue to be relentless because this health care law has been bad for patients, it has been bad for providers, and it has been terrible for American taxpayers. Republicans will continue to come to the floor to offer the facts about how the health care law has harmed American families. We will continue to offer solutions that deliver the real reform people have been asking for all along—the care they need from a doctor they choose at lower cost.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, if the Senator from Iowa is intending to speak, this Senator will only use about 5 minutes.

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

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I wish to embrace this package that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has brought forth to the floor.

First, it is much needed bipartisanship which has been shown on the committee. That is a very good thing, given the fact that we have had so many contentious and divisive issues.

But, secondly, what it does is set up a process by which the Congress would express its approval or disapproval with regard to a future agreement that may be made between Iran and the United States to prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon.

First is the process by which we would express that vote, and then if the agreement is concluded by the end of June, the actual vote on whether sanctions under the agreement should be lifted. So it is a two-step process, and it is often confused. That is why it is important to keep this committee bill clean.

As I have already expressed to the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee on the floor of the Senate 2 or 3 days ago, it is this Senator's intention that all of the amendments, which generally have a deleterious effect and that are generally considered poison pill amendments—this Senator will oppose them. It is my understanding that leadership of the Foreign Relations Committee will likewise oppose those amendments.

Then, I might say, assuming this legislation is passed and we have this process in place and the President has said he will sign it into law—if the framework, as announced a few weeks ago by the President, is fleshed out in the final details of the agreement, and those details, by the end of June, reflect the framework of the agreement that has been announced, it is this Senator's intention to support the agreement.

I do that, very simply, on what is in the best interests of the United States. If, in fact, this agreement, once completed—if the framework is fleshed out—prevents Iran from developing a nuclear weapon for at least a 10-year period—and there are other 15-, 20-, and 25-year period benchmarks in the framework—but if they are prevented from developing a nuclear weapon within 10 years, and we know there is a regime in place in order to detect that so we have the verification, and that because of the verification we have at least a year's advance notice so that appropriate action could be taken—if all of that is included within the agreement, it is this Senator's intention that I will support the agreement.

Why? Because if we keep Iran from having a nuclear weapon for 10 years at least, the world is going to be a very different place in 10 years. And what we will have done as a country is prevented Iran from going ahead and developing a nuclear weapon now, of which we would have to face those consequences with possible military action.

I do not shy away from supporting military action if that is necessary to prevent a nuclear weapon from being developed. But if we have a path to achieving the same thing, doing it diplomatically and having the guarantee of at least 10 years—if not 15 and 20—then, to this Senator, that seems to be in the interests of the United States.

I want to clearly state where this Senator is coming from. I happen to think that is in Israel's interests as well. The interests of the United States and Israel are inextricably entwined when it comes to the defense of that little democracy that is a beacon of democracy in that part of the world. I have some familiarity with the integration and the sharing of our military forces, as well as our intelligence apparatus.

It is clearly in the interests of the United States that we see that Israel's security is protected. From what I see of the framework of this agreement, if fleshed out, then I think that is in the interests of our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I rise to stress the importance of ensuring nuclear negotiations with Iran to preserve our national interests and our security, one that protects the security of our allies and partners in the region and maintains peace and stability in the world.

As a member of the Iowa Army National Guard and serving on the Armed Services Committee in the Senate, I am focused on strengthening our national security, developing strategies to confront terrorism, and discussing ways to support our exceptional military.

While I believe Iran's long-term goal is developing nuclear weapons, its most effective line of effort against us and our allies has been through its unwavering support of terrorism. The Obama administration should only accept a final deal which prohibits sanctions relief until Iran abandons its support of terrorism.

Providing Iran with sanctions relief would only enhance their opportunity to fund proxy groups which threaten our Israeli allies and whose activities have led to horrible consequences for

millions of people in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

While the Obama administration has been seemingly eager to relieve sanctions in an effort to convince Iran to sign a nuclear deal, Congress cannot stand by and watch as a deal is negotiated that paves the way for Iran to obtain nuclear weapons. We must take a step back and examine their actions, and it is absolutely crucial we understand who is on the other side of the negotiating table.

Iran continues to be the world's lead sponsor of terrorism and a supporter of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who is responsible for killing hundreds and thousands of his own people, creating the gravest humanitarian crisis in modern history, and who facilitates the continued rise of extremism and sectarianism across the region.

Iran has shown unwavering support of terrorism and has aligned itself with groups that are hostile to the United States, our allies, and partners in the region. In fact, Iran continues to fund groups that threaten our Israeli allies, who are very concerned about Iran amassing nuclear capabilities and the direct threat they pose to the region. After this longstanding pattern of behavior, I do not believe we can trust that Iran will curb its ambitions or support for terrorist activity on their own.

Despite any agreement Iranian President Hassan Rouhani may agree to, I believe Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei will ultimately maintain his policy of attempting to obtain a nuclear weapon and may use any funds obtained through prematurely providing sanctions relief towards that end, as well as to support terrorists.

Iran's more than a quarter century long effort to obtain a nuclear weapon will not subside overnight. It is a faulty assumption to trust that Tehran is on the side of the rule of law. Iran has a very troublesome track record of deception when it comes to compliance and trustworthiness, which is why we need a deal that ensures America's and the world's ability to verify and enforce any agreement with Iran. This includes complete and open access at any time to all of Iran's facilities, to hold them true to their word and to verify their actions. We must also have the proper enforcement mechanism in place so that any broken promise garners an appropriate and immediate response.

This accountability can be enforced through renewed and strengthened congressional sanctions. Sanctions have been effective in the past, and we must keep this option on the table. In fact, these sanctions are what brought Iran to the negotiating table in the first place. So we must not be too quick to suspend them.

The ever-increasing and complex threats we face in the Middle East underscore how crucial it is that any longstanding agreement with Iran must go through Congress. This enables the American people to have a voice. Congressional review is supported by a bipartisan majority of my colleagues and a majority of Americans. It is common sense. We must have more oversight of this process and the opportunity for thoughtful consideration to ensure we have been very clear about our demands and the framework of any final agreement.

There is no doubt the administration shares my concern and the concern of many of my colleagues regarding the hundreds of thousands of Syrians who have been murdered with barrel bombs, sarin gas, the indiscriminate shelling of cities, been in prisons or the millions more who have been forced to flee their homes.

We must stop Iran from supporting this criminal regime which has helped engulf the region. Sanctions relief without ensuring funds would not go to Assad or to terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, which are key to the survival of the regime, would do nothing to help achieve a favorable political or military solution in Syria.

With that in mind, I cosponsored the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, which has bipartisan support and is before the Senate today. This legislation embraces fundamental and core principles that lay the foundation for a good deal with Iran. This deal ensures congressional review of a final agreement. It demands that no congressional sanctions be lifted during the review period, and it safeguards congressional oversight of Iranian compliance.

This bill is a good starting point, and I want to praise the good work by the chairman of the committee for continuing to push for congressional review. Our ultimate goal must be to curb all Iranian terror, and this will never happen if we do not confront and contain Iran's nuclear ambitions.

I believe a final deal which does not address Iran's support of terrorism and other groups which subvert recognized governments is not in the best interests of our Nation, and an agreement without these assurances will miss an opportunity to provide stability in the region.

In closing, the bottom line is that Iran must never be allowed to develop a single nuclear weapon—not now or at any point in the future. A nuclear Iran presents one of the greatest threats to peace and stability in our time.

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

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I thought I would take this time—I know Senator CORKER is at a lunch with some of our colleagues and is going over some of the issues concerning how we are going to move forward, but I thought I would take this time to at least tell our Members that we are working very hard to try to resolve some of the amendments Members want to offer.

I must point out that there have been no requests for amendments on the Democratic side. I know Senator CORKER is a little bit more busy than I am. He is trying to work with the number of amendments that have been filed by Republican colleagues. But we are trying to go through those amendments and see if there is a way consistent with the purpose of the bill that we can work out language that would accomplish what the author of the amendment is attempting to accomplish but consistent with the purpose of the bill—to make sure that we have an orderly way to review any agreement reached between the United States and our negotiating partners and Iran on its nuclear weapon program and that we get timely notice from the administration in regard to material breaches so that we can take action to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapon state. There are also provisions in the bill that provide notification by the administration and important information so that we can do our work.

We are taking a look at these amendments and trying to see whether we can work our way forward in order to move this bill in the same method that it moved through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As the Presiding Officer knows, we worked together to try to get that accomplished.

We started the debate yesterday, and we are going to continue it today. Senator BARRASSO brought an amendment forward, which he wants to have pending, that would change the certification requirements. We are trying to work out a way in which we will be able to take that issue up before the full Senate. Senator CORKER and I are trying to resolve that issue as to how we can bring that forward.

I talked about this issue yesterday and explained the certification requirement to all the Members of the Senate. The President has to certify on a regular basis that Iran is basically in compliance with the agreement. If they can't do that, then we get into an expedited process for imposing sanctions or to take action against Iran.

There are a lot of amendments that have been filed—they are not pending—that would require additional certifications by the administration, and if the administration cannot make those certifications, there is an expedited process. The problem with going beyond the terms of the nuclear agreement on any of those certifications is that it affects the bill itself, and that is why we call them poison pills. I will try to explain that.

Senator BARRASSO's amendment dealt with a certification that Iran will

not be involved in terrorism against the United States or any of our citizens. But there are several other amendments that have been filed that would change the certification requirements so that the President would have to make those certifications or it could trigger expedited procedures.

Why do we call those poison pills? First of all, it changes the balance of what we are trying to do, and it is highly unlikely that we are going to be able to get that bill to the President for his signature. It will compromise what we are trying to do, and we are not going to be able to get the bill done. We will end up losing the bill. We will lose the opportunity for the committee to get the information and consider it. The committee needs to have a period of time in order to go through the review process. And the administration will not be able to exercise its waiver power for additional sanctions relief. All of that hard work will be lost. It is really counterproductive to what the authors of these amendments are trying to do.

The second consequence that could happen, if this is in the bill, is that the President would not be able to make the certification and we would very likely never get an agreement. Therefore, what will happen is that the United States will be accused of walking away from trying to negotiate an agreement with Iran. We would be isolated, and our chances of preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state becomes that much less likely to happen.

The third reason why these amendments are problematic and are poison pills has to do with the fact that it becomes a negotiating objective for the United States. These are good objectives. We don't want Iran to be able to sponsor terrorism. It is certainly something that is part of our policy. But if we make it a negotiating objective, then the administration has to achieve that in order to prevent sanctions from going into effect in order to achieve our objective. That makes it much more difficult to achieve the primary objective, and the primary objective is to stop Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state.

Although these amendments are well intended, they have the consequence of just the opposite. These amendments will make it less likely that we will prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state.

The same is true on any certification. One of the amendments that have been filed says that we have to certify that Iran recognizes Israel's right to its own sovereignty. I want Iran to recognize Israel's sovereignty. We put very strong language into this bill and made it clear that Israel's security is of prime concern to us. It is in the bill. If we make it a certification requirement—think about this for a moment—it means our negotiators will have to figure out a way to negotiate with Iran something they don't want to do. And what will we have to give up in order to get that? What will they put on the table in regards to international recognition? It distracts us from objective to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state, which is critically important to the security of Israel. These amendments do just the opposite of what they are intended to do.

I mentioned that because we are trying to move forward with this legislation. I hope that we can do it very quickly and we can find a path forward. We are going to try to accommodate the fair considerations of these amendments. But I urge my colleagues to take a look at their amendments, to work with Senator CORKER, to work with me, and let's see whether we can accommodate, within the framework of the legislation, any concerns that the sponsors of the amendments may have. Then we can do what the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was able to do on a 19-to-0 vote. It makes the Senate much stronger, and it makes the United States much stronger when we can come together on these amendments.

Our objective is to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state, and the best way for us to do that is to speak with a united voice and the type of work we did in a bipartisan manner.

The people of Maryland and the people of this country want us to work together. They want us to resolve issues. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee was able to do that.

I urge Members who have filed amendments to work with us so we can find a way forward to make sure this bill remains intact and gives Congress the best chance for an orderly review of the process and gives us the tools we need to make America's position even stronger to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise to speak in favor of the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act.

First, I wish to commend my colleagues, Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN, for their leadership on this important bipartisan legislation. Because of their crucial leadership, the Foreign Relations Committee recently passed this bill unanimously in a 19-to-0 vote. One thing that is so important to remember, as we debate this bill, is that without this legislation, we would not have a say at all on the President's nuclear deal with Iran.

Now, I will be the first to say that an international agreement of this magnitude should have been considered the same as a treaty. But, unfortunately, the President chose to completely circumvent Congress in this process.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, of which I am a member, did all we could to ensure that the American people, by way of Congress, get a say in this deal. If we let the perfect become the enemy of the good, however, and fail to pass this bill, the President will be able to go ahead and implement any and all aspects of a nuclear deal with Iran. This bill prevents the President from having a total free hand with regard to this potential deal with Iran and from prematurely lifting sanctions.

According to CRS, this lifting of sanctions would mean an estimated $130 billion in sanctions relief would start flowing to Iran. That is more than Iran's entire annual defense budget. Imagine what they could do with over $100 billion. They could continue to fund terrorism. They could continue to prop up Assad's regime in Syria. They could continue to fuel the Houthi rebellion in Yemen. And, yes, they could further fund development of their nuclear weapons program.

Congress passed the very sanctions credited with bringing Iran to the table, and I firmly believe that Congress should play a role in any decision to lift those sanctions. While the President may be able to waive sanctions on Iran later this year, permanent sanctions relief can only come from Congress.

My colleagues and I still have many questions about this deal, and we must take this opportunity to get a period of congressional review so we can get answers to these questions and prevent the President from prematurely lifting sanctions. We are truly facing a global crisis, and the world is watching.

As Prime Minister Netanyahu recently said before Congress, a nuclear Iran is not just a threat to Middle East security, and it is not just a threat to U.S. security. It is a threat, indeed, to global security. There is no scenario in which a nuclear Iran would be anything but catastrophic. Indeed, a nuclear Iran would spark a wave of proliferation in the Middle East and potentially worldwide. And if we don't like Iran's behavior today, imagine what their actions will be like if they have a nuclear weapon with the missiles to deliver them. Under no circumstances can we allow Iran to become a nuclear weapon state—not now, not in 10 years, not ever.

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

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

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I would like to talk about the important legislation we have pending right now on

the Senate floor. I do not see a greater threat to our security interests in this country than a nuclear-armed Iran. Our national security interests require a permanent and verifiable end to Iran's nuclear weapons program.

Today, I come to the floor to support the legislation that I was proud to be an original cosponsor of that will ensure that Congress reviews this agreement if there is an agreement reached with the Iranians and that we will have a voice on this agreement because without Congress's involvement in this—I believe it would be a huge disservice to the American people to not have their elected representatives weigh in on such an important matter.

What matters most is, is this agreement one that is transparent, verifiable, and will actually end their nuclear program because the country of Iran is the largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world. We cannot give one of the most dangerous regimes in the world the most dangerous weapon.

Iran described the United States of America as the ''Great Satan.'' Iran said it wants to annihilate or wipe out the State of Israel. Iran is a country that is supporting terrorist groups around the world. We can only imagine the devastation that could be wrought if Iran gets a nuclear weapon. So the stakes cannot be any greater with what is happening right now with the administration negotiating with this regime, which is not a regime we can trust, unfortunately. So the terms of this agreement matter.

The elected representatives of this country need to have a vigorous debate about this agreement in the Congress, and we need to make sure it is not an agreement that allows them to continue their march toward a nuclear weapon.

Some of the information that has been released so far about the framework the administration has put together has raised a number of red flags about where this agreement is going. It is my hope that this legislation passing will ensure that Congress is able to review the agreement to make sure it is one that ends their nuclear program.

Some of the concerns I already see with this framework agreement suggest that the administration is moving in a direction that would not fully force Iran to dismantle its nuclear infrastructure or require Iran to address its long history of deception regarding its nuclear program, including long-term questions about the program's military aspects. The framework that has been released would not address Iran's support for terrorism, its intercontinental ballistic missile program, or its stated desire to knock Israel off the map.

In order to ensure that we have an agreement that would end Iran's nuclear program and hold them accountable, we cannot have a situation where Iran keeps so much of its infrastructure and then can run up to a nuclear weapon or walk to it instead of running to it.

Even worse, as we look at the framework of this agreement and the inspection framework the agreement would require, we cannot have an agreement that does not allow unlimited inspections of Iran's nuclear program at any time, unannounced, because this is a regime which is not a trustworthy regime. Yet, as I look at the terms of the framework that the administration has announced, it seems we have a ''mother, may I'' approach to asking Iran whether we should go in and inspect their facilities. Well, that is going to be unacceptable. We need to ensure that the terms of this agreement, if reached, make sure we can show up at any time, anywhere, without notice to Iran, to inspect their facilities to make sure they are adhering to the terms of the agreement.

In short, the framework of the agreement that has been released by the administration suggests that this potential deal could eliminate hard-fought sanctions on which we worked together in this Congress on a bipartisan basis—economic sanctions that brought Iran to the table, which would take years to restore—in return for concessions that have only reversed Iran's program by days or weeks. Iran would retain a massive nuclear infrastructure, and they don't seem to be answering the tough questions about their support for terrorism or their missile program.

Iran's activities during these negotiations in supporting terrorism have continued. As their diplomats sit at the negotiating table and smile for the cameras, their government continues to support terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and provide arms and funding to the murderous Assad regime in Syria that has murdered hundreds of thousands of innocent people. It has continued to destabilize Yemen. It is imprisoning innocent Americans and developing an intercontinental ballistic missile whose obvious purpose is to potentially deliver a nuclear weapon to the United States of America.

I intend to offer an amendment to the pending legislation that will address Iran's ICBM program because one of the concerns I have is that there doesn't seem to be any mention in these negotiations of Iran's development of ICBM capability that could be the delivery mechanism to deliver a nuclear weapon to hit the United States. I will offer that amendment to indicate to this administration that this issue needs to be on the table. We need to not only stop their nuclear program, we need to stop Iran's ICBM program, which some of our intelligence estimates have indicated could be successful as soon as the end of this year.

That is the testimony we have heard in the Armed Services Committee. So there is real urgency that we stop not only their nuclear program but also their support for terrorism and their work on an ICBM that could deliver harm—very grave harm—to our country. In fact, in February, Iran had actually successfully launched a long-range missile system and used a space launch that could be the potential manner in which they would deliver a nuclear weapon capability to our country.

So this is a real concern that we address their missile program in the context of this agreement. In fact, on January 29, 2014, the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, testified that ''we judge that Iran would choose a ballistic missile as its preferred method of delivering nuclear weapons'' capability. One of the real important issues that we need to debate and address when it comes to their state sponsoring of terrorism is what is happening in Yemen right now.

As we stand here, we have had a situation where Iran has been harassing and threatening cargo ships in the region, challenging a core American national security and economic interest in the freedom of navigation, particularly in key chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

If you look at our interest in what has happened in Yemen, Iran has supported the Houthis that have undermined the Government in Yemen. Why is that important to us? It is important to us because we had to leave Yemen, in part, as a result of Iran's support of terrorism in Yemen. Who presides in Yemen? Who is one of the great presences in Yemen? Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, a group that has vowed to attack our country, a group that has made attempts to attack us and our country. Iran is aiding the way, through their terrorism there, to give Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula more space to conduct attacks that can harm our interests and the interests of our allies.

So this legislation that is pending on the floor right now—if we were to not pass it, I think people need to understand the implications of it. The implications of not passing this legislation that is on the floor is that Congress would not have any say on these issues that are so important, would not have any say on whether the agreement that the administration is negotiating with Iran actually will end their program, actually will dismantle their nuclear program, actually will have a verifiable inspection regime that allows inspectors to go anywhere unannounced at any time to ensure that they are not cheating on whatever agreement is reached between us and the Iranians.

So this bill could not be more important. I thank the sponsors of this bill. I certainly thank Senators CORKER and CARDIN for their leadership in the Foreign Relations Committee, to ensure that the people of this country, through their elected representatives, on something of such importance when it comes to the national security of the United States of America—that their elected representatives perform their important oversight role here.

So I am hopeful we will pass this legislation that the U.S. Congress—I hope

the administration, with some of the concerns I have raised about this framework, really toughens what they are doing in this framework to end their program, to have a transparent, verifiable inspection regime to address the ICBM Program, to address Iran's state sponsorship of terrorism. I hope they will do that.

But I know that on behalf of my constituents, it is important, if any agreement is reached, that we have that debate here, that we have a voice in it on behalf of the American people. In doing so, we will protect the national security interests of this country to make sure that whatever agreement is entered into is really a good agreement, one that protects our country, which protects our allies, and ends Iran's nuclear program, as none of us can look in the mirror and think about one of the most dangerous regimes in the world having the most destructive weapon in the world. That is something that—as I think about all of the national security issues, this is on the top. So I cannot think of a more important debate we could have now or more important legislation that we could work on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

THE NEW CONGRESS AND PATENT REFORM

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the 114th Congress is just a little over 100 days old now, but we have actually seen what used to be called the world's greatest deliberative body actually get back to work and be producing results for the American people. Just a few months into this session, we have passed important legislation, from a budget—we will perhaps, as early as Tuesday, pass the first budget since 2009.

We repaired something called the doc fix, which maybe is inelegantly named but basically fixed a problem that had been lurking since 1977, when somehow we got the idea that we would be able to save money by cutting the reimbursement rates to doctors and hospitals. Then we were shocked, absolutely shocked, that some doctors would not see Medicare patients and some hospitals could not afford to build or expand in rural areas and the like.

Well, we got that off the table as well. Then, I am glad to say, last week we were able to pass some major antitrafficking legislation which, of course, dealt with the victims of human trafficking, the profile of which is about a 12- to 14-year-old girl who is literally in human bondage. So we have done some, I think, good work. There is a lot more we need to do.

Of course, the present legislation that enjoys broad bipartisan support is the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015. I, too, commend the chairman and the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee. I know this can be a frustrating process because other Members of the Senate now have ideas they want to offer by way of amendment. We are working through this. I think this will test their patience and ours in the process.

But this Chamber is poised to continue in the spirit of bipartisanship on other important issues as well: trade promotion authority, which, to me, is the essential link between us and the ability to pass important trade agreements.

Texas, as the Presiding Officer knows, is the leading export State in the Nation. We benefit from that because we understand that when you have markets for the things we grow or the livestock we raise or the manufactured goods we make, it is good for our economy, it is good for job creation. Well, trade promotion authority will be good for hard-working Texas families and families all across the country.

But there is another area that may not seem of great significance but I think is important, where I think we have another opportunity. That has to do with patent reform and particularly lawsuit abuse reform. Now, patents do not just affect the technology sector. They just do not affect the financial sector and Wall Street. It literally is a Main Street problem because you have restaurants now, you have real estate agents, you have hotels, motels, you have construction companies that have been sued by patent trolls, people who do not make anything, merely they hold a license to a patent and use that to file—frequently—frivolous litigation in order to literally shake down the defendant.

Many times it is people who cannot adequately defend themselves. Maybe they are a startup business, an innovator who has come up with a new idea or a better idea and they are thinly capitalized. Can you imagine what happens when they get sued by the patent trolls? Well, it is a sad and short story. Either they have to capitulate and pay the ransom or they go out of business entirely.

But patent reform is an issue whose time has come again. It is one I have been involved in for a number of years in the Senate. In 2011, after years of negotiations, Congress passed something called the America Invents Act. This is the first major patent reform in decades. This is something that makes America unique. You know, in Texas we believe in property rights. Well, what we are talking about is intellectual property rights. But when somebody smart or creative or innovative comes up with a better idea, our Constitution and our laws provide a means to protect that against people who would take it or steal it or infringe upon it. That is why patent law is so important.

But one of the issues left unaddressed was this rising tide of lawsuits and the threat of litigation, of which a wider and wider swath of stakeholders are now complaining loudly—again, not just the big technology firms but restaurants, hotels, motels, builders, real estate agents, and the like. So, in 2013, a number of Members of Congress began working on this legislation to address those frivolous claims, which really kill jobs because it kills innovation in the process.

Bills were introduced in the House and the Senate targeting the various aspects of this problem but focusing primarily on lawsuit abuse, lawsuits brought not to vindicate a legitimate claim by somebody who actually has lost something of value but merely somebody who is a holder of a license to sue, in essence, and uses it to shake down these small startup companies and innovators.

Well, we were able to see the passage, in December of 2013, of something called the Innovation Act in the House of Representatives. That legislation passed overwhelmingly, 325 to 91, with almost all Republicans and the bulk of Democrats supporting the bill. Here is the other thing. This is not just a Democratic or Republican issue. This is something the administration wholeheartedly supports.

In fact, this is one of the stories I told last year as I was traveling around Texas and elsewhere as evidence of the dysfunction, because, I asked: If Republicans are for something and Democrats are for something, if the majority of Congress is for it and the White House is for it, why is it we can't get it done? Well, the obstacle to getting it done was eliminated with the new majority in the Senate.

So I think we are poised to take good action here very soon. We are in a new Congress with a new leadership and a new majority. That is everything when it comes to reforming our broken patent system. Today, we had a broad bipartisan group of people, from the ranking member and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, the former chairman, Senator HATCH, to Senator SCHUMER, who is in the leadership of the Democrats in the Senate, Senator KLOBUCHAR, and Senator LEE.

All of us announced this broad, bipartisan support for a new piece of patent reform legislation designed to attack this problem of lawsuit abuse and the shakedown of America's innovators and job creators and technology creators. So Republicans and Democrats alike have come to realize that under the status quo, too many of our most promising innovators, not to mention other businesses, are wasting time and money in frivolous, costly litigation. This legislation takes a number of commonsense steps that ends the exploitation of these so-called patent trolls.

Many of those are not particularly earth-shaking, but the culmination of them, I think, will have a real positive impact on this problem.

First, it would require plaintiff's in patent cases to simply explain the substance of their claim when filing the initial lawsuit. What frequently happens is a lawsuit will be filed with no real detail as to the nature of the claim

or the infringement of the patent. Then there would ensue costly and time-consuming discovery, until finally the plaintiff would figure out some claim they could make to hang their hat on. Well, we eliminate that by requiring upfront specific notice of what the infringement is in the nature of the claim.

Second, it would stay cases against the end users, including restaurants, motels, hotels, construction companies, and the like, and would give the party with the major incentive to defend the case the opportunity to do so. So the person who is actually responsible for the manufacture of a product—let's say a Wi-Fi device—the manufacturer would defend that case and not the hotel or motel that happened to deploy that Wi-Fi device in their hotel or their motel.

Third, the bill would bring greater fairness to the discovery process by limiting discovery until the court resolves threshold motions in the case. This is important because the court is going to have to make a decision whether this is a legitimate case that could go on and thus authorize the expensive and time-consuming discovery. If it is not a legitimate case, then that is the time for the court to address it by a motion to dismiss or some other legal device.

Fourth, it would curb the practice of sending abusive demand letters. What I have learned is that in patent litigation these days, there would be demand letters which literally would carpet bomb the people who were using some of this innovation, in an effort to shake them down. It causes a lot of expense, delay, and other consternation.

Fifth—and this is perhaps one of the most critical elements—it would allow courts to shift responsibility for the cost of patent litigation more often to the losing party when the court finds that the claim was not a reasonable claim to be brought. In other words, it was a privileged claim. So no longer can you file a lawsuit and pursue it, even though it is a bogus case, without any fear of actually having to pay the costs of the other side that prevails in a case involving an unreasonable use of the legal process.

So I believe, as many of my colleagues do, that these are sensible reforms, and it is one way we can take a step to protect better the access to justice for plaintiffs with legitimate claims of infringement and to deter those who simply abuse the system.

This is another promising area where I think the 114th Congress can distinguish itself from the 113th and previous Congresses by showing we can actually work together to try to solve real problems in a bipartisan way that hopefully will improve life just a little bit for the people we represent.

Entrepreneurs in Texas and throughout the country need this legislation to protect them from abuse of patent litigation practices that have burdened America's private sector for far too long.

The last point I would make is that I saw this morning the news that, basically, America's economy did not grow in the last quarter. Basically, the gross domestic product was, I think, a 0.2 percent increase. That is simply too slow of an economic growth to create the jobs we need for the population increases we are seeing.

So if we are going to get our economy growing again, which is the best way to raise the wages of hard-working American families, we are going to need to do a number of things, such as reform our tax system. We are going to need to rein in overreaching regulation, which is a wet blanket on the private sector and on job creation, and we are going to need to do efforts such as patent reform, as in this litigation reform legislation I have just been talking about. That will unleash this sleeping giant of the great American economy for the benefit of all Americans once again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I wish to speak about the pending business before the Senate. Of all the things we will do, probably in our political lifetime, I can't think of anything more important than getting the Iran nuclear ambitions right.

I stand in two camps. I would love a good deal, and a bad deal would be a nightmare.

What is a bad deal? A bad deal would be one that would result in a North Korean outcome, where you lock in a capacity in the hands of the Iranians to be monitored by the international community. And one day they break out, you wake up, and you have a bomb.

A bad deal would be too much capacity in the hands of the Iranians. That would spook the Sunni Arabs who want to go buy a bomb of their own.

I cannot tell you the consequences to the world and to our Nation if you have a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. That is what a bad deal leads to.

A good deal allows us to wind down a hotly contested dispute between Iran and the world over the last 20 years without firing a shot. A good deal would be allowing the Iranians a peaceful nuclear power program, what they claim they want, with no real capability in a year—or any time—to make a bomb.

If all they want is a peaceful nuclear power program, I do not object.

I do object to the capability to enrich the uranium in a fashion that one day they could break out, as North Korea did—because I don't trust the Iranians.

So to Senator CARDIN and to Senator CORKER, you have navigated this very well. You have a Democratic President, who I think wants the deal way too badly, and we have a Congress who I think wants to have a say.

We created the congressional sanctions, and we should have a say as to whether they are waived based on the deal and the quality of the deal that they may negotiate with the Iranians and the P5+1. Since we created the sanctions, I don't think it is unfair to this President or to any other President to say: You need our vote. You need a debate to occur before we will agree to do that.

Now, is it a treaty? I don't think so. I would love it to be a treaty, but it is not.

The one thing I don't want to do, in the process of dealing with a very dangerous situation in the Middle East, is to turn the rules upside down in the Senate because I like a particular outcome.

Senator JOHNSON sincerely believes this is a treaty. I do not doubt his motivations at all. But I have come to conclude, right or wrong, that it doesn't meet the definition laid out by the Supreme Court and the precedents of the past.

When we did a deal with North Korea, it wasn't a treaty. Maybe it should have been, but it wasn't. So I don't think we are going to change the rules just because we have a very dangerous moment in American history, in world history, and a President some of us don't trust or like.

Condoleezza Rice says it is not a treaty. I don't think she would have said that if there had been any doubt in her mind.

I have had discussions with other Republicans who have served in prior administrations, and they have come to the same conclusion.

So we had a vote, which was a good thing, and the concept of it becoming a treaty was voted down. The debate was worthy of the Senate, and I applaud all those who were involved.

There are aspects of amendments that are pending that I would embrace in a New York minute, but I believe that some of these amendments—no matter how much I support the concept—would break apart a bipartisan coalition that has taken a year to form.

To Senator CARDIN and Senator CORKER, you have struck a balance that I think makes sense to me. A Democratic minority, I don't believe, is going to turn all the power regarding this deal surviving or being struck down to the Republican majority. If I were in your shoes, I would not do that.

And to my colleagues who ask that the Democratic minority with a Democratic President cede the entire process to us, as Republicans, that is probably a bridge too far.

I don't think a Republican President would like that outcome. I don't think a Republican minority would turn over to a Democratic majority the ability to act unilaterally on something of this consequence.

So what have Senators CORKER and CARDIN been able to do? They have brought the bill to the floor without a filibuster, allowing the debate and, hopefully, more votes.

To my Democratic colleagues, don't shut my Republican friends out. They

all have a say, and I will vote with you against some of the amendments that I like but that I just think would break the deal apart. Let's get the Senate back in business in a reasonable fashion.

What I would say is that the construct of this bill makes perfect sense to me. You need 60 votes to disapprove the deal. Sixty votes are required for any major action in the Senate. That has been the historical precedent of the Senate. So the Democrats are not asking us to do something that hasn't been around as a concept for a long time.

What does it require? It requires the 54 Republicans, if we are together, to convince 6 Democrats that this is a bad deal.

I think, if it truly is a bad deal, our Democratic colleagues—for the good of the Nation—and the consequences of a bad deal are understood by them—would join with us and say: This is not what we want, Mr. President; try harder. Rejecting a bad deal does not mean that we want to end diplomatic efforts. It means that we believe the deal in question falls short.

To Senator CORKER, you did a good job, because I don't think anybody in your shoes could have convinced the Democratic Party basically to deal themselves out.

To Senator CARDIN, you made it possible, along with Senator MENENDEZ, for us to have this debate and create, I think, a standard of disapproval consistent with the traditions of the Senate.

There may never be a deal, but if there is one, it has to come back here, and every American will get to hear the contents of the deal—while some think it is good, and while others think it is bad—and you will not have to wonder what we are doing with regard to the Iranians.

If the Republican Party cannot convince enough Members of the Democratic Party that it is a bad deal, then we will be disappointed, but that is democracy.

Israel is very worried about the framework. The Sunni Arab States are very worried about the framework. It is not a final deal yet.

Three things, I think, have to be there for me to be on board: anytime, anywhere inspections in Iran by international organizations of our choosing, including military facilities; no upfront signing bonus in terms of money until the Iranians comply with the initial phases of the deal, because they will take the cash and put it in their war machine; and whenever the inspection regime is supposed to terminate—10 years, 15 years or whatever date you pick—at that moment, the then-existing President, whoever he or she may be, has to certify that Iran is no longer a state sponsor of terrorism, because you would not want to end an inspection regime if they were still involved in state terrorist activity.

So the two leaders on this bill, from my view, have crafted a very good piece of legislation. People dislike it for different reasons, which means it is probably the balance we need—and I can't think of a better way to do this.

To those who think they have a better way, the only thing I can tell you is you better get some Democrats to agree with you. Because if you cannot, it is just all talk.

What BOB CORKER and BEN CARDIN have been able to do is they have given the Senate a voice that we wouldn't have otherwise. They have given the American people a chance to understand the deal better than any opportunity I know of, and they have given us the power that every Member of the House and Senate should want in this regard, a chance to have a say and to be recorded in history.

The outcome may not please you, but this is the best process I could think of, given the way the Senate works and the way democracy works, which means both parties are going to require a say in something this important.

So, well done. I look forward to voting for this deal. Any amendment you want to bring to the floor, I will vote for it if I think it is a good amendment that will not deconstruct the deal or unravel the deal. I will vote against the amendment if I think it will break the deal apart, even though I am sympathetic to it, because my goal is to get this right, to make sure that any final deal with the Iranians is explained to the American people through the House and the Senate debate, and that can only happen if this bill becomes law.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I wish to say, while the Senator from South Carolina is on the floor, that at the end of the day, this bill is the Graham vision. I mean, the fact is that this is Graham-Corker, Corker-Graham. It has evolved so that we could have the kind of support that we need to pass this into law.

But I thank Senator GRAHAM for his pushing to make sure we got to this point. There is no question. Look, you have been on this issue for months. You have pursued this. You have sold this publicly. You have worked with us as we have caused this to evolve to get the number of votes that we may get actually to cause this to become law. I don't know of anybody in our caucus or anybody in the Senate that has more of a foreign policy national security background—no one.

I thank you for your efforts to ensure that we do everything we can to make sure we have a voice in this agreement that may happen on June 30 or a few days thereafter. We wouldn't be here without your continual pushing.

I yield the floor for Senator CARDIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, before Senator GRAHAM leaves the floor, I wish to concur with Senator CORKER's observations.

It was several months ago that Senator GRAHAM grabbed me on the floor of the Senate to talk about this being the most important responsibility we have—to have an orderly way to oversight any potential agreement.

So I really thank Senator GRAHAM for his attention to this issue. We wouldn't be here today if it weren't for his leadership on this issue, and I thank him for the manner in which he brought this issue forward so that we could find a way to get this done in a constructive manner.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I, too, want to begin today by thanking the Senators from Maryland and Tennessee for the work they have put into this process. It is important. It is important that Congress have a role in reviewing any deal the President concludes with Iran.

This is an extraordinary threat to the world. This is a nation which is run not by the individual with whom they are negotiating; Iran is a country governed and run by a radical Shia cleric who has ideas about the future of the world that are frightening.

What is more frightening is the information we have received from this administration about the framework they agreed to on April 2. It is a framework, for example, that would allow Iran to retain thousands of centrifuges and grant them the right to enrich uranium. It is an arrangement that would allow Iran to avoid dismantling its key facilities. It is an arrangement that allows Iran to continue to deny its past work on nuclear weapons. It is an arrangement that would allow Iran to retain a significant ballistic missile program, including efforts to develop a missile capable of hitting the very spot on which we stand right now. It is an arrangement that does nothing whatsoever on the cases of those Americans who are currently unjustly detained in Iran. It is an arrangement that does nothing to impact Iran's state sponsorship of terrorism or its brutal treatment of its own people. In fact, it is an arrangement that, if it goes through, will turn over billions of dollars into the hands of the chief state sponsor of terrorism on the planet. And it is an arrangement that will do nothing to bring an end to Iran's self-proclaimed support at the highest levels of its government for the destruction of the State of Israel.

Since April 2 of this year, by the way, the Iranians have made clear that they are not willing to do many of the things the White House itself has claimed are part of this deal. We are going to get to that in a moment, but understand that when the White House announced this deal, they put out a fact sheet. They said: This is what the deal is about. Iran is disputing it. They do not have the same fact sheet. In essence, what Iran is saying was agreed to and what the United States is saying was agreed to are, apparently at this

moment, two very different things. That alone should be concerning.

In addition to that, this deal is going to be a dangerous deal, a bad deal not just for the United States and our allies in the region but especially for our allies in Israel.

That is why it is important that Congress take a stand and ensure that this deal is not implemented unless its fundamental flaws are addressed.

That is why I supported this legislation in the committee. I voted for it so we could be here on the floor to strengthen it—not in a committee of just 20 members but here with all of our colleagues—over a number of days, potentially weeks, so the country could see what is at stake.

The first amendment I will offer today and hope we can overcome objections to is pretty straightforward. Here is what the amendment says: It says to the President that no deal can go forward unless the President certifies that the Iranian leadership has accepted Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

Why is that important? Because we will hear the argument that this has nothing to do with nuclear weapons, that this has nothing to do with the nuclear capacity of Iran. I am going to make the argument that that is not true.

The first reason is—we have to understand why it is important for Israel to exist as a Jewish state. Israel is not just a country; it is a homeland for the Jewish people, created in the aftermath of the Holocaust with the belief that never again would there not be a place for the Jewish people to go and seek refuge and be able to live if they faced persecution—as they have for thousands of years and as they do even now but especially in the aftermath of the Holocaust. So Israel is not just a country. It has a special and unique purpose that sets it apart from any other nation on Earth. It was created as a homeland for a persecuted people who survived despite the deaths of 6 million human beings in the Holocaust, maybe more. It is now a homeland where they will be safe.

It is also important to remember that beyond that, it is in the national security interests of the United States. What is Israel? Israel is a pro-American, free enterprise democracy. I promise that if there were more pro-American, free enterprise democracies in the Middle East, our lives would be a lot simpler and the world would be a lot safer and a lot better. But there is one, and this country must always be firmly on the side of that one country, this free enterprise, pro-American democracy in the midst of a region full of chaos and uncertainty.

Why is that relevant to this deal? Here is why it is relevant. This is not just a deal about what Iran is allowed to do in its nuclear program; this is a deal that would lift billions of dollars' worth of sanctions off of the Iranian Government. And what is the Iranian Government going to do when they get access to those billions of dollars? Are they going to donate it to charity around the world to feed the hungry and house the homeless? No. Are they going to use it to substantially improve the rights of their people in their own country? No. They are going to use those billions of dollars to do what they are doing now with less money: export terrorism to every corner of the globe.

Today, Iran is an active sponsor of terrorism in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Latin America, and Europe. This is the same government that tried to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador here in Washington, DC. This is the same Iranian Government that blew up a Jewish center in Buenos Aires. This is the same Iranian Government that tried to detonate a bomb in Uruguay. They use terrorism the way normal countries use diplomacy. Yet, now we are going to turn over billions of dollars to them.

The reason why this has something to do with Israel is, what are they going to do when they have even more money to carry out these sorts of acts? They are going to invest it not just in their nuclear program, but they will invest it in their sponsorship of terrorism and they will invest it in their long-range rockets.

What have they told us they want to do with this increased capacity? What have they told us is the chief goal of this Government in Iran? Why do they need this terrorism? Why do they need those weapons? Why do they need those long-range rockets? Well, let's take them at their word. Here is why they need it. They need it because, according to a tweet put out by the Ayatollah in July of 2014, ''This barbaric, wolflike and infanticidal regime of Israel which spares no crime has no cure but to be annihilated.''

In November of 2014, the Supreme Leader posted a chart on his Twitter account. It had ''9 key questions about the elimination of Israel.'' I am holding it here, but it can be found online. Here are some of those questions:

''Why should the Zionist regime be eliminated?''

''What does elimination of Israel mean in the viewpoint of the Imam Khomeini?'' Meaning him.

''What is the proper way of eliminating Israel?''

''How will the proposed referendum succeed?'' Well, here he is talking about actually calling for a referendum in Israel, but the Jews can't participate in the referendum, according to him.

''Why do we oppose compromise proposals?''

The point is that this is a country led by a leader who has made it very clear repeatedly, time and again, that one of their main objectives is the destruction of Israel and ending Israel's existence as a Jewish state. When someone says that over and over again, we should believe them. This is not for domestic consumption to make him look good in Iran, the way some in the administration would argue. I believe they mean it. Do you know why I believe they mean it? Because they sponsor terrorism in an effort to kill Jews and Israelis.

In January of 2015, a suitcase full of explosives was found near the Israeli Embassy in Uruguay. The day after an individual left a suitcase bomb near the Embassy, a senior Iranian diplomat by the name of Ahmed Sabatgold left the country. Uruguayan authorities clarified a report claiming that he had been expelled from the country. They said no. They suggested that, in fact, he was a person of high interest with whom they would like to speak but that he left the country on his own.

So the reason why the existence of Israel as a Jewish state is directly tied to this deal is simple. We are about to turn over billions of dollars into their hands, and we have every reason to believe they will spend a significant portion of that money to destroy our strongest and most important ally in the region and one of the most important allies in the world.

The first amendment I have offered is pretty straightforward. It calls for any deal to require that Iran recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

The second amendment I will propose is even more straightforward, even more on point. Here is what it requires. It requires that this final deal be the deal the President says it is. Here is what I mean by that. I filed an amendment that basically took the White House's own fact sheet—by the way, I have problems with that fact sheet. The deal as the President describes it is not a deal I believe will work. It is not a deal I believe will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. But just to take them at their word, just to prove this point and to ensure we are building safeguards into what we are doing here, I took the White House's own fact sheet, what they said the deal was about, and I say in this amendment that the final deal must be about those points that the White House already says it is. For the life of me, I don't understand why that would be controversial. My amendment is basically this. It says the deal has to be what you say it is. That is all my amendment says. Yet, somehow I have been told this is going to box in the White House. If it does, it boxes them in with their own words.

But here is the reason I am doing it. Iran apparently negotiated a very different deal than the one the White House thinks we have. For example, the White House says this deal will impose permanent inspections on Iran. The State Department fact sheet says: ''Iran's adherence to the Additional Protocol of the IAEA is permanent, including its significant access and transparency obligations.'' The Iranian fact sheet says: ''Iran will implement the Additional Protocol on a voluntary and temporary basis for the sake of transparency and confidence building.''

That doesn't sound like the same deal to me.

How about the inspection of military sites? In an interview on CNN, Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes said: ''If we see a site that we need to inspect on a military facility, we can get access to that site and inspect it.'' But on April 9, Iranian Brigadier General Hossein Dehghan said: ''Visiting military centers are among the red lines and no visits to these centers will be allowed.''

How about the scope of the sanctions relief? The State Department fact sheet says: ''United States and European Union nuclear-related sanctions will be suspended . . . All past U.N. Security Council resolutions on the Iran nuclear issue will be lifted simultaneous with the completion, by Iran, of nuclear-related actions addressing all key concerns.'' But Iran says: ''According to the reached solutions, after the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Joint Action, all of the U.N. resolutions will be revoked and all of the multilateral economic and financial sanctions by the EU and the unilateral ones by the U.S. will be annulled.'' So are the sanctions limited or total? We say they are limited; Iran says they are total.

There are three more differences. On the timing of the release, at a news conference on April 2, the President said:

> In return for Iran's actions, the international community has agreed to provide Iran with relief from certain sanctions—our own sanctions and international sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council. This relief will be phased as Iran takes steps to adhere to the deal.

So the President is basically saying that every time Iran complies with a portion of the deal, an additional sanction will be phased out; it will be in steps. If they do something, sanctions come off slowly. Trust but verify. That is what the American Government says. That is what the President said in his own words. But Iran says: ''We will not sign any deal unless on the very first day of its implementation all economic sanctions against Iran are lifted all at once.''

How about restrictions on enrichment? Are there restrictions for 10 years or for 15 years? The United States and the State Department Fact Sheet says:

> Iran has agreed to not enrich uranium over 3.67 percent for at least 15 years . . . Iran has agreed to not build any new facilities for the purpose of enriching uranium for 15 years . . . Iran has agreed to not enrich uranium at its Fordow facility for at least 15 years . . . Iran has agreed to not conduct research and development associated with uranium enrichment at Fordow for 15 years.

That is a lot of 15 years.

What does Iran say? On April 4, on an Iranian state TV channel, its Foreign Minister said:

> The limitations are for 10 years and then enrichment will continue its own scientific progress. We have accepted 10 years of limitations.

Last but not least, research and development—is it limited or not limited? The United States, in our fact sheet, says it is limited.

> Iran will not use its IR–2, IR–4, IR–5, IR–6, or IR–8 models to produce enriched uranium for at least 10 years. Iran will engage in limited research and development with its advanced centrifuges, according to a schedule and parameters which have been agreed to by the P5+1.

The group that negotiated all this.

That is what the U.S. fact sheet says. But what does Iran say? Iran says no.

> Iran will continue its research and development on advanced machines and will continue the initiation and completion phases of the research and development process of IR–4, IR–5, IR–6, and IR–8 centrifuges during the 10 year period of the Comprehensive Plan for Joint Action.

So these are at least six major points of difference where Iran is saying the deal says one thing and the United States is saying the deal says another. What my amendment does is it takes what we say the deal is and puts it in the bill and says: Any final deal must be what you told us it is, not what Iran says it is. Yet, somehow, apparently, that is controversial.

This is not a game. This is a very serious matter because this is a country—and I don't mean its people but its leaders—that has shown the willingness to sponsor terrorism and do atrocious things all over the world.

When you read in the newspaper about civilians being barrel-bombed and gassed and killed in Syria, do you know why Assad is able to do that? Because of the help he gets from Iran.

When you read about the rockets that flood into Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem and Haifa and cities all across Israel every couple years as Hezbollah launches attacks, hiding behind human shields while they are trying to kill Israelis, do you know how they are able to get them? Because of help from Iran.

When you read in the newspaper that yesterday the Iranian military hijacked a vessel in international waters, when you read that they tried to kill the Saudi Ambassador in Washington, DC, when you read that they tried to set off a bomb in Uruguay, when you read how in 1994 they did set off a bomb at a Jewish center in Buenos Aires, Argentina—this is who we are dealing with. Now they are on the verge of being able to enrich weapons-grade uranium and reprocess weapons-grade plutonium. Now they are headed quickly toward building a long-range rocket capable of reaching not just Israel but Europe and the United States.

This is a very significant moment because this President is about to sign a deal that will place in their hands billions of additional dollars. If this is the terrorism and the nuclear activity they are pursuing now with sanctions on them, imagine how much more they will be able to afford to do once the sanctions are lifted. That is why it is so relevant on this point of Israel but also on the details of this deal.

By the way, as I said, and I will repeat it, the State Department fact sheet, what the President says the deal is—I am not comfortable with that either. I don't think that will work. It is not as if I am celebrating what they say the deal is.

All I am asking is this: At a minimum, before you bring and sign a deal, at least let it be what you say it is. Don't come back here in 6 months and surprise us with ''By the way, it was the Iranian's fact sheet that had it right and not ours.''

So I hope we will be able to move on these amendments. I don't think they undermine this one bit. I think they are relevant to the debates we are having. I think they are relevant to the decision we are being asked to make. And it is about time this body takes this up. Congress has an important role to play. The people of Florida whom I represent speak on these issues on this floor through me and the senior Senator from Florida. We have a right to have these issues debated. This is not some minor issue we are talking about; this is the security not just of our strongest ally in the region but of our very own country.

So I hope we will have an opportunity to have debates on these amendments. When we hear people say: If these amendments pass, we are going to lose the support of the bill; the President might veto it—well, if you want to make that argument, make that argument, but let's have a vote on it. What is wrong with having a vote on an amendment? If you don't want to vote on the amendment because you disagree with me, stand up and say you disagree with the amendment and you vote no. If you agree with the amendment but you are going to vote against it because you think it unravels this process that is being put in place, then say that. But let's have a vote on it.

If you don't want to vote on things, don't run for the Senate. If you don't want to vote on things, don't run for office. Be a columnist. Get a talk show. Everyone who runs for office knows that what we are called to do here is vote on issues on which sometimes we are uncomfortable.

There is a microphone at your desk. Come to the floor and give a speech and explain to the world why you are voting against a deal that requires Israel to have a right to exist. And if you say you believe Israel has a right to exist but you are voting against it because you don't want to unravel the deal, people will respect it. You can make your argument, but vote. Don't tell me we can't have votes on these things. You can argue that we shouldn't pass it, and I will argue against you, but don't tell me we can't even vote on it because then what you are saying is you want to be protected from taking a position on it, you don't want to take a position that you think is tough, and that I find to be unacceptable.

So, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment in order to call up the two

amendments I just described, amendment No. 1141 and amendment No. 1148, en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, let me explain to my friend from Florida—a very valued member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—that we have two pending amendments. We have also been working to get a vote on Senator BARRASSO's amendment dealing with terrorism. Senator CORKER and I are trying to work through many amendments that we can clear that Members have brought forward. They are working with us to get those amendments where we can consider them.

For an orderly process, since so many amendments have been filed—and, I might say, they have all been filed by Republican Members of the Senate—we need to make sure we have an orderly way to consider these amendments and vote on these amendments. For those reasons, I do object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, just as a point of clarification, I am a member of the committee that heard these amendments, particularly the one on Israel's right to exist. They were available to me at the time. I chose not to offer them in consultation with the Senators who worked so hard to put them together. I could have offered my amendment in the committee. I did not in order to work in a cooperative way to move it from the committee onto the floor.

I will admit that I did not speak to Senator CARDIN about this in particular, but I was told by multiple Members that the right place and the right time for me to offer this amendment would be on the floor, not in the committee, because the hope was to get it to the floor as quickly as possible. So in an effort to move this issue to the floor, I held back on filing this particular amendment with regard to Israel's right to exist on the assurances and on the conversations that we had that, in fact, when we got to the floor, these amendments would be heard.

Now, if, in fact, it turns out that today is not going to be the day we vote on the amendment, I understand that. I know there are a lot of other people with ideas they want voted on.

My understanding is and I have been told that there is potentially the effort here to say we shouldn't have any amendment or just have three or four amendments, and I think that is an unfair position to take. I am not saying that is what the Senator from Maryland is arguing. But I hope that at some point, as the order is established—I will continue to make this motion in the hope that this amendment can not just be pending but can be part of this debate.

I respect the views of my colleagues, some who I think will come to the floor and say they agree with me on the substance of it but don't want to vote on the amendment because they think it endangers the agreement we have in place or the bill that is in place. But I do think it deserves a vote, and I do think it deserves that debate.

So I hope in this orderly process that is established, these two amendments—I have filed seven, but I prioritized these two—these two will get the consideration I believe they deserve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, as Senator RUBIO pointed out, we had no discussions about this. I don't know what Senators he is referring to, but let me just talk briefly about some of the points Senator RUBIO mentioned because I think it is important that we respond to them.

First, the bill we are considering, S. 615, is a bill that doesn't deal with the merits of a potential deal. It deals with the right way for Congress to review a potential deal that is reached between the United States and our trading partners and Iran concerning its nuclear weapon program. That is what this bill does. It doesn't say whether the President's agreement is a good one, a bad one, et cetera. It is a process for us to review it and take appropriate action because we are the ones who impose the sanctions. Only the Congress can permanently change or eliminate the sanctions. Therefore, it is important that we have an orderly way to review the potential deal. That is what it does—nothing more, nothing less.

It also, by the way, gives us the opportunity to get notice of material breaches and be able to take action to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state if they, in fact, breach the agreement.

So the two points Senator RUBIO mentioned—the first is that there are different interpretations being given, one by the United States and one by the Iranians. Well, we think the first amendment we filed is going to help deal with that. It is pending right now. It requires us to get every official document of a potential deal in the language in which it is agreed to. So that amendment is pending—it is followed by Senator CORKER and me—for the reasons Senator RUBIO mentioned, and that is, we want to see the original text. We don't want to have the interpretation by the Iranians; we want to know what the language says. That is our responsibility. We are going to get that once we take up this first amendment—I hope it is approved—that will give us the original language text of every agreement and exhibit that is agreed to between the parties.

The second issue Senator RUBIO mentioned is Israel's right to exist and Iran acknowledging Israel's right to exist. I fully agree with Senator RUBIO. I don't think there is a Member of this body who doesn't want Israel legitimated by every country in the world. It is our key ally in the Middle East. It is a country that shares our values, that has a strategic relationship with the United States, and I could go on and on.

Since 1948, the United States and Israel have enjoyed a very close and important relationship, and we have taken so many actions in this body in order to protect Israel's right to exist. That is why we included your language and Senator BOXER's language in this bill where we say, ''The President should determine that the agreement in no way compromises the commitment of the United States to Israel's security or its support for Israel's right to exist.'' We have that in the bill.

What Senator RUBIO's amendment would have us do—and let me explain this. What his amendment would have us do is require that the President certify to us before he could submit any agreement—enter into any agreement—that Iran has recognized Israel's right to exist.

This agreement we are negotiating with our negotiating partners and Iran is to deal with Iran's nuclear weapon program. I know from my conversations with the Israeli Government that they think that is the most important thing for their existence—the most important thing—that Iran not become a nuclear weapons state. That is what Israel needs, and that is what we are trying to get.

The Rubio amendment, although it is not intended to do that, would say: No, that is not the most important thing. The most important thing is to negotiate the language, what Iran says about Israel, not their nuclear weapons program, and that the President must achieve that.

When you are negotiating, the more things you put on the table, the weaker position you are in in achieving the most important point, and that is making sure we have a strong agreement that Iran can never become a nuclear weapons state.

That is why this amendment will accomplish just the opposite as far as Israel's security is concerned. Yes, it is a poison pill. Yes, it will defeat this bill. That also happens to be true. And, yes, it will mean it will be almost impossible for the President to negotiate a nuclear agreement with Iran.

I think most people in this body and most people in America believe that the best course is a negotiated agreement with Iran. The unintended consequences of this amendment would make it virtually impossible to have that agreement completed.

So, yes, we could get into debate on the specifics of your amendment. I am more than happy to do that. But we have an orderly process here, and there are a lot of amendments that have been filed, and we are trying to work out a way to do this. Senator CORKER and I have been on the floor now for 4 or 5 days debating this issue, and we will debate any Member who wants to come by because we want do make sure we do have an open debate. But we are

going to follow an orderly process. And this amendment, as well-intended as it is, is an amendment that would very much compromise what we have tried to do in a bipartisan way, and that is to make sure that this Senate and the House have an orderly way to consider any deal struck between our negotiating partners and the United States and Iran. That is our responsibility, and we are going to stay focused on that, and we are going to end with a bipartisan product that is in I think the best traditions of the United States Senate.

So I respect very deeply my colleague's commitment to Israel. I do.

All of us are committed to Israel, but let's think about what is the most important thing for Israel, and that is having a strong agreement that prevents Iran from becoming a nuclear weapon state. Let's focus on that because that, I think, this bill helps us achieve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I appreciate the passion of the Senator from Maryland. He makes points that I think are very relevant to debate once we are on the amendment. That is all I am asking for, a vote on the amendment. He is making an argument right now why he thinks we should not pass this amendment.

I respect the orderly process. I did not necessarily recognize that coming to the floor and trying to get my amendment pending would somehow unravel this orderly process, but I am more than happy to work within the orderly process, whatever that process entails. I would be more than happy to have it explained to me, where I fit in, in this orderly process, and at the appropriate moment we will file the amendment. But I wanted a vote on the amendment, and then the argument you made here today can be made.

The only other point I would make is it is true, tragically, that there are a number of countries in the Middle East that do not recognize Israel's right to exist. The difference is those countries are not trying to build a nuclear weapon, nor are they building long-range rockets, nor do they use terrorism as an instrument of statecraft, nor do they every Friday hold ceremonies in which their top leader chants ''Death to Israel'' and ''Death to America,'' nor do they actively support terrorist groups around the world that exist for the sole purpose of destroying Israel itself, nor do they have billions of dollars in sanctions that are about to be released.

At the end of the day, there is a big difference between what is happening in Iran and the billions of dollars we are about to turn over to them and these other countries that, unfortunately, do not recognize Israel's right to exist but are not going around actually actively trying to destroy the State of Israel.

The last point is on the differences in the details. Listen, I do not think the fact sheet the State Department put out is sufficient. I think the deal, as described by the President, is not good enough and will not lead to the prevention of a nuclear weapon. But all I am asking for in my amendment is for the deal he submits to be the one that he says he negotiated.

He has told us already we have reached a preliminary agreement. He has announced it to the world what that preliminary agreement is. All I am saying is what you submit to us must be what you told us it is. Here is why I say this: Because this negotiation has been going on for a while. Every month that goes by, Iran gains more concessions, and our position slips further and further.

If you look where we were at the beginning of this process to where we are today, it is a very different place from where we were not that long ago. We are in a very different place than we were in terms of what we had originally said. When this whole thing started 10 years ago, 12 years ago, the U.N. Security Council put sanctions on Iran and said you are not even able to enrich or reprocess. Now they are allowed to enrich and reprocess. They are even allowed to enrich and reprocess at an even higher rate for research purposes.

If these negotiations keep going on, we are going to end up building the bomb for them at the rate it is going, because every year and every month that goes by, they gain more and more concessions. All I am trying do is, at a minimum, freeze this in place and say, Mr. President, you have told us that you have negotiated a deal. Mr. President, you put out a fact sheet that told us what the deal is. You have represented it to the American people as the deal, and now all this will say is what you submit to us must be what you told us you agreed to on April 2. Do not come back here in 6 months and submit to us a deal, and as it turns out the Iranian fact sheet is the one we should have been relying on.

All I am asking, even though I do not think that what he has agreed to is sufficient—all I am asking in my second amendment is that the deal he submits be the deal he says it is, nothing more and nothing less.

I hope that through this orderly process the moment will arrive, before we vote on passage of this, that my amendments can be heard and voted on. I respect the arguments that others make about why they cannot support them and what they think they will ultimately do to the process. All I am asking for are votes on these amendments, and then everybody is free to vote the way they want and for the reasons they want.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I can, quite frankly, share the Senator from Florida's frustration, and I urge us to fully debate and begin voting on important amendments to this bill. I am all for any productive, orderly process, but I want it to be productive, to be inclusive, and to get going. I share the frustration that has been expressed on the floor that that is not quite happening right now.

In light of that, I want to be assured of moving forward and getting a vote on a very important amendment for me. I send a second-degree amendment to the desk, Vitter amendment No. 1186, as modified. I ask that it be a second-degree amendment to Corker amendment No. 1179 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Corker amendment is not pending.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I have a parliamentary inquiry: What is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending amendment is amendment No. 1155.

AMENDMENT NO. 1179

Mr. VITTER. In that case, I call for regular order with respect to the Corker amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment No. 1179 is pending.

AMENDMENT NO. 1186, AS MODIFIED, TO AMENDMENT NO. 1179

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I send this second-degree amendment to the desk, Vitter amendment No. 1186, as modified, to be a second-degree amendment to Corker amendment No. 1179, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Louisiana [Mr. VITTER] proposes an amendment numbered 1186, as modified, to amendment No. 1179.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

(Purpose: To require an assessment of inadequacies in the international monitoring and verification system as they relate to a nuclear agreement with Iran)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

''(C) ASSESSMENT OF INADEQUACIES IN INTERNATIONAL MONITORING AND VERIFICATION SYSTEM.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—A report under subparagraph (A) shall include an assessment by the Secretary of State, in conjunction with the heads and other relevant officials of agencies with responsibilities under this section, detailing existing inadequacies in the international monitoring and verification system to the extent such inadequacies relate to the agreement transmitted pursuant to paragraph (1), as outlined and in accordance with findings and recommendations pertaining to verification shortcomings contained within—

''(I) the September 26, 2006, Government Accountability Office report, ''Nuclear Nonproliferation: IAEA Has Strengthened Its

Safeguards and Nuclear Security Programs, but Weaknesses Need to Be Addressed'';

''(II) the May 16, 2013, Government Accountability Office Report, ''IAEA Has Made Progress in Implementing Critical Programs but Continues to Face Challenges'';

''(III) the Defense Science Board Study, ''Task Force on the Assessment of Nuclear Treaty Monitoring and Verification Technologies'';

''(IV) the IAEA Report, The Safeguards System of the International Atomic Energy Agency; and the IAEA Safeguards Statement for 2010;

''(V) the IAEA Safeguards Overview: Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols;

''(VI) the IAEA Model Additional Protocol; and

''(VII) the IAEA February 2015 Director General Report to the Board of Governors.

''(ii) RECOMMENDATIONS.—The assessment required under clause (i) shall include recommendations based upon the reports referenced in such clause, including recommendations to overcome inadequacies or develop an improved monitoring framework and recommendations related to the following matters:

''(I) The nuclear security program's long-term resource needs.

''(II) A plan for the long-term operation and funding of the IAEA and relevant agencies increased activities in order to maintain the necessary level of oversight.

''(III) A potential national strategy and implementation plan supported by a planning and assessment team aimed at cutting across agency boundaries or limitations that impact its ability to draw conclusions—with absolute assurance—about whether Iran is developing a clandestine nuclear weapons program.

''(IV) The limitations of IAEA actors.

''(V) Challenges within the geographic scope which may be too large to anticipate within the sanctioned treaty or agreement or the national technical means (NTM) monitoring regimes alone.

''(iii) PRESIDENTIAL CERTIFICATION.—Not later than 30 days after the Secretary of State submits a report under subparagraph (A), the President shall certify to the appropriate congressional committees and leadership that the President has reviewed the Secretary's shortfall assessment required under this subparagraph, including the recommendations contained therein, and has taken necessary actions to address existing gaps within the monitoring and verification framework.

''(D) CLASSIFIED ANNEX.—A report under

Mr. VITTER. I would be happy to explain the substance of the amendment.

This is about verification, obviously a really crucial part of this debate. Many of us who have concerns about the President's proposed agreement do not think we have adequate means to verify any agreement in the context and the structure he has proposed. So, clearly, those verification issues are very, very important.

This amendment tries to address those in a substantive and significant and meaningful way. What the amendment does is actually specifically lists documented reports from groups such as the IAEA, the U.S. Defense Science Board Task Force, and others, which have highlighted specific verification problems. The amendment would require the President to report in a very detailed, specific way on those documented verification problems and make certifications regarding making progress on and solving those verification problems.

Again, I think this is absolutely necessary because I believe the present deal, as it is being put together, does not have adequate verification capability. This would help fill that hole. I am not sure it would completely fill that gap, quite frankly, but this is a good-faith attempt to address those very real issues by, again, delineating specific documented verification problems and requiring the President and his administration to address them, to report on that, and to make certifications regarding how they are addressing those specific documented verification problems.

I urge strong support of this good-faith amendment. This would dramatically, in my opinion, improve this agreement by helping address those verification concerns. I believe they are very legitimate concerns shared by many people on both sides of the aisle. I urge strong consideration and, ultimately, approval of this verification enhancement.

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

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 1180.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I know the good Senator from South Dakota knows that we are working with the other side to get a number of amendments ready to vote on today, and we certainly appreciate his constructive effort in letting us know what he is doing.

I object to making it pending because the other side—I am doing this on their behalf—wants to work through the tranche that we have right now.

I hope he discusses his amendment and maybe we can make it pending later today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Tennessee, who is managing this bill. I know they are trying to find a way forward, and I hope that will include getting some votes on amendments, including this one. I think this is a very reasonable amendment and one that certainly fits within what we are trying to accomplish here.

The Senate is in the midst of an important debate. This week we began a discussion on the role of Congress in approving or disapproving a nuclear agreement with Iran. Any agreement we reach with Iran must ensure one thing, and that is that Iran will never be able to acquire a nuclear weapon. That should be everything that this discussion is about.

A nuclear-armed Iran would threaten the safety, stability, and security of the entire world. It would also pose a direct threat to the United States and to our allies in the region. Given the stakes of this debate, it is critical that Congress have a role in reviewing any agreement so that the American people's voices can be heard. That is really what this is all about—giving the American people a voice on something that is of critical importance to America's national security.

I thank the chairman and the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for forging together a bipartisan path forward to allow for such a congressional review.

While I support the underlying bill and appreciate the work of our bill managers, I do believe the bill could be significantly strengthened, and the amendment I am introducing today will help to do that.

My amendment, No. 1180, is one way that the Senate can strengthen the underlying bill. This amendment will require the Secretary of State to verify whether the International Atomic Energy Agency, or the IAEA, which would be in charge of inspections in Iran under any agreement, would have access to Iranian military bases. There have been recent reports that have indicated that the Iranian military is hostile to any inspection of military facilities.

General Hossein Salami, the deputy head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, recently told Iranian media: ''They [the inspectors] will not be permitted to inspect the most normal military site in their dreams.'' Again, that statement was made by General Hossein Salami, who is the deputy head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard.

If the administration enters into an agreement that doesn't guarantee the inspection of Iranian military sites, the American people and our allies in the region will have very little reason to believe that Iran will comply with any agreement. Without such an agreement, Iran can conduct research on nuclear weapons systems on military bases outside the reach of international inspectors. That is not an acceptable scenario.

We must ensure that any deal with Iran is verifiable, enforceable, accountable, and promotes security and stability in the region and around the world. That goal is hard to achieve without a robust inspections regime that allows for international inspections of Iran's military sites.

Accordingly, I encourage my colleagues to support my amendment, which will help ensure that Iran cannot circumvent an agreement conducting

research on nuclear weapons systems at military facilities. A nuclear-armed Iran is a threat to the safety, security, and stability of the entire planet.

I hope that when an agreement about how to proceed with regard to amendments is reached, this amendment will be included among those amendments that will be debated and voted upon, because I do think it will strengthen the underlying agreement. I certainly look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides, not only to get this amendment adopted but also to ensure that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon. That is first, foremost, and what this always needs to be about.

With that, 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.

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

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I am here on the floor this afternoon with my good friend from North Dakota, and I want to speak to an issue as it relates to the Iranian sanctions bill that we have on the floor in front of us.

This is about an issue that so many of us care deeply about—about our own domestic production here, about the strength of our economy, about the strength of our national security and how the United States in a global environment really stands toe-to-toe in good strong competition around the world. I want to speak today about U.S. oil—the ban on U.S. oil—and how this all intersects with Iran, Iranian sanctions, and specifically, the sanctions on Iranian oil.

I am submitting a bipartisan amendment to allow U.S. oil to compete with Iranian oil on the global market. I am pleased to be joined in this effort by Senator HEITKAMP, Senator HOEVEN, Senator LANKFORD, and, hopefully, others, as this discussion progresses.

Iran's Government is largely dependent on its exports of oil for its revenue source. It sends oil to countries such as China, Japan, India, and South Korea. The sanctions that have been imposed have really hurt Iran's economy. They have brought Iran to the table. The sanctions that have been in place have cost the government in Tehran some $40 billion in lost export revenues in 2014 alone, according to the Treasury Department.

Under the sanctions regime and the Joint Plan of Action, countries are still able to purchase Iranian oil, and I don't think a lot of folks understand that. They think the sanctions are in place and Iran can't derive a benefit from the oil exports. But in fact, companies are still able to purchase Iranian oil, up to 1 to 1.1 million barrels per day and—no surprise—countries have purchased up to that limit nearly every month since the JPA was implemented in November of 2013. So sanctions are in place, but Iran is still deriving the benefit of being able to sell Iranian oil to other nations.

It is worth pointing out that this is only possible because the State Department does not include condensate in its definition of crude oil. If you include the condensate volumes, then the limit of 1.1 million barrels per day was breached back in January of 2014, in February, March, April, and May—not June—in July, September, October, and December, and also in February of 2015, according to reports that came out of the International Energy Agency.

It simply does not make sense for us to lift sanctions on Iranian oil while we keep them on American oil. It just doesn't make sense that we would tell Iran that we are going to allow these sanctions to be lifted over there, but by keeping our oil export ban in place, we are effectively imposing sanctions on U.S. oil producers. This is a de facto sanctions regime against ourselves.

Now, one can understand why we have imposed sanctions on certain places—on Tehran, Moscow, and Damascus. However, we are effectively talking about sanctions on the Permian, on the Utica, on the Niobrara, and on regions where we have the ability to produce a resource that helps this country, helps to create jobs, and helps with all aspects of our economy. We are going to say: Iran, OK, we are going to relieve sanctions on you, but we are going to keep in place sanctions on U.S. oil producers.

So what this amendment does is to add a third section to the Corker-Cardin Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015. It would require a DOE report on Iranian crude oil and condensate exports. It would then lift the de facto ban on U.S. crude oil and condensate exports. It still preserves the emergency authorities of the President to prohibit exports if it is warranted. So there is that safety valve there.

The deadline for submission of this report to Congress would be 60 days following the enactment of the act. It would still be required even if an agreement with Iran were not reached. It would effectively address two issues—the relative ability of U.S. and Iranian oil producers to compete in the global market, which is pretty important out there, and the extent to which any agreement with Iran would increase Iranian oil exports through the lifting of sanctions.

As we know, American oil producers are generally prohibited from exporting overseas. Alaska is the one exception to the oil export ban. A very limited amount is exported over the years. Iran, on the other hand, currently exports over 1 million barrels per day of oil onto the global markets.

Now, we had a hearing in the energy committee a week or so ago. The Presiding Officer was there. We heard from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the EIA. They estimated that lifting the sanctions on Iran would increase Iranian volume by some 700,000 to 1 million barrels per day. So if we lifted that, EIA estimates that Iran would then be in a situation where they would be able to put out onto the market, basically to new purchasers, 1 million barrels per day.

Think about what that does—giving them new markets for their oil. As they have new markets for their oil, they get paid for it. EIA estimates that given the price of Brent being where it is in this range right now, it would be $25 billion per year to Iran from the ability to put that out onto the market and gain new customers—an extra $25 billion.

How comfortable are we with that? How much of that $25 billion is going to fund terrorist organizations, terrorists, in areas that we are fighting directly and immediately today? What kind of sense does it make that we would say that we will remove sanctions on Iran, allowing them to move their product to new customers, gain potentially $25 billion additionally into their treasury to do who knows what with it.

At the same time, what this does is it harms American producers who are unable to compete with Iranian oil due to this outdated ban on U.S. exports that was imposed 40 years ago. So we are going to let a 40-year-old policy sanction us, sanction our economy and benefit Iran's. Lifting the ban on U.S. oil exports would let American oil compete with Iranian oil. It would reduce Iranian revenue from oil exports. It would send a strong signal to U.S. allies that still depend on Iranian oil that alternative supplies are available and lower global oil prices which would decrease the price of gasoline and other consumer fuels.

A few hours ago, on the other side of the hallway here, over in the House of Representatives, we heard from the Prime Minister of Japan. Japan is currently purchasing and is able to purchase oil from Iran. Don't you think that our friend Japan would much rather have security and diversity of supply if it were to come from their friend the United States? I sure think so.

The amendment that we have introduced lifts the ban by requiring, after 30 days have elapsed from the enactment of S. 615, that crude oil exports may be authorized on the same basis that they are currently authorized for petroleum products, whether it is gasoline, diesel, jet fuel or whatever it is. Currently, these petroleum products can be exported without a license. In fact, we are, here in this country, the largest exporter of petroleum products in the world. So think about this as you kind of shake your head and say: What is going on here? We are the largest exporter of refined products, but yet we impose a flat ban—an outright ban—on the crude itself.

So, again, we have a safety valve in the amendment that preserves the

President's emergency authority, which is derived from the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, the National Emergencies Act, and the Energy Policy and Conservation Act. They prohibit exports, under these various proposals, if needed for the safety and security of the Nation. We do not touch those. We do not impact them in that amendment at all.

So it is important to recognize that what we are doing here is we are looking at an outdated policy that is 40-years old. We are moving into present time and space, where we have a situation with a country that we have tried desperately to bring to the table to be a nation that will work with us rather than against us. Yet part of what we are considering is an action that would remove sanctions on them and continue to keep in place sanctions on this country.

It makes no sense to me. I would hope that my colleagues would consider it. I know that my colleague from North Dakota has given great thought to this, has great understanding about the issue, and also has great passion about how we ensure that from a national security perspective we are covered in all corners.

So I would ask my colleague from North Dakota, as she has reviewed an antiquated and an outdated policy, and being from a producing State such as North Dakota, where she is working to advance the opportunities not only for North Dakotans but for people all over this country, how people in North Dakota feel when it is suggested that we are imposing, effectively, domestic sanctions on them, while at the same time we would relieve sanctions on Iran.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I want to thank my good friend from Alaska for giving me an opportunity to talk about this policy of sanctions that is wrong, wrong, wrong on so many levels. When we first looked at it, we need to understand that the embargo, or the limitation on the exportation of crude oil in this country, is a policy decision made by the President—initially, President Nixon—in response to a number of producers going around oil price support controls.

So this is a 1970's policy. Unfortunately, when we transitioned away from price supports for crude oil, we never removed this embargo, we never removed this restriction. That was a mistake at that time. It continues to be a colossal mistake for our growth towards energy independence in this country and our ability to use our energy and our oil for soft power and to actually provide a consistent and ready supply of crude oil to our allies so they are not beholden, not only to Iran, but to countries such as Russia.

So it is critically important that we examine some of the concerns that people have about lifting the embargo. Obviously, in North Dakota, we do not see any logic, because we are kind of a commonsense State. We do not see any logic behind not allowing crude oil to be exported but allowing every refined product that we could produce in this country access to a foreign market.

That makes absolutely no sense. If the logic behind this is to try and maintain stability and a lower gasoline price, then we should lock down gasoline and we should not export gasoline. The antiquated policy that we are talking about today did not have a lot of logic after we deregulated oil. It has even less logic in the dangerous world we live in. We know that so many of our foreign enemies rely on oil revenue basically to fund their terrorism activities, to fund their government, to supply the necessary government services that keep them in power.

We have an opportunity to say to our allies, whether it is Japan or in Europe, don't worry about whether someone is going to hold you hostage because you will not be able to heat your homes in the winter or provide gasoline to your communities and your consumers. Do not worry about that because we have your back.

But we cannot have their back if we don't have the ability to export our crude oil. The bottom line is that on every level, in terms of foreign policy, in terms of what we should be in this country—on every level—a policy of maintaining an embargo, a restriction against exports of crude oil makes no common sense—absolutely none.

But let's talk about domestic policy because I think some of the concerns that have been expressed to me by my colleagues, and I am sure Senator MURKOWSKI's colleagues, have been this: Well, won't this increase gasoline prices? I have to applaud Senator MURKOWSKI because very early on she heard that, and she said: Let's have some real intellectual work done. Don't rely on my economics 101. How about we actually get economists from Brookings, economists from the Aspen Institute, economists from all over the country, who have come to one single conclusion, which is, that it will not raise gasoline prices.

In fact, the conclusion is quite the opposite—that allowing us access to an international market could, in fact, reduce gasoline prices. Why would that be, you wonder? Because of the fluke of how we refine crude oil in this country, most of our refineries are based on heavy sour crude. The crude we produce in North Dakota is light sweet crude. We don't have a big refining capacity for light sweet crude, so we have a price reduction in our country.

So how are gasoline prices established? They are based on that higher crude oil price, because they are refining crude oil that comes in from other places such as Saudi Arabia. They are refining crude oils that come in from Venezuela, and they are charging an appropriate price. Some people would say there is a little bit of price creep here as we are looking at gasoline prices.

The ability to get our crude to market is absolutely critical. Now, there are a lot of people who also think that we should keep a captive market on a lot of our resources. We have heard this argument in natural gas, and we heard this argument in crude oil. They said: We should have a captive market. I have a constant reply. I say: I have a lot of hog farmers who like low corn prices. The solution for low corn prices has never been not to export corn.

This is the only commodity that is traded on a global price that does not have the ability to find its market. Now, what is the consequence of that? I would tell you, to my friend from Alaska, and I think she sees this, one of the things I sincerely believe is that the ability to produce oil—our domestic production of oil—had a lot to do with driving Iran to the negotiating table.

They saw that we could, in fact, infiltrate the market and take market share. That is threatening to a lot of the former OPEC countries that are wanting that captive market. If we had access to that market, we would be sending a message. So why don't we do the right thing here? Why don't we understand how this export ban on American crude oil is restricting our ability to use crude oil as an appropriate soft power opportunity? Why don't we talk about how actually allowing for the export of crude oil could drive down gasoline prices in the United States of America and continue the energy renaissance?

If we cannot find our market, if we cannot find our market in North Dakota for this production, guess what happens? It either goes into storage or it gets shut in where it is, which is in the field. Hundreds of thousands of jobs will be lost. But more importantly, our energy security in this country will be jeopardized and harmed.

This policy of opening up this restriction is so right on so many levels. I applaud the Senator from Alaska for bringing it forth in this context. I think it is critical to talk about it in this context. But I also applaud her for all of the work she has done and we have supported, as she has built out the case—the economic case—for why this policy makes no sense at any level.

It is wrongheaded. It is time to change it. This is an opportunity. We will not end because it is only fair to every oilfield worker out there, it is only fair to every owner of a royalty or minerals in place, it is fair to every operator, and it is fair to the people of this country to engage in trade, level the playing field, and make sure we are telling our friends and allies that they don't have to buy their oil from countries that threaten their security every day. We have a supply of oil that can readily be exported and provided to them.

I thank my good friend from Alaska for her continued advocacy on behalf of

consumers of this country and her continued advocacy on behalf of an energy-appropriate policy in the United States of America.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from North Dakota. She has articulated the case so well not only from a domestic perspective but from the international perspective as well. We need to appreciate that as we are recognized as a nation, as that superpower when it comes to our military strength and all those who serve us have to offer, that we are also an energy superpower. We have not yet embraced that as a responsibility, as an obligation to use that not only to our advantage but to the advantage of our friends and allies around the globe. That is an important transition, transformation we need to make.

We are mired down in policies that are decades old, based on history that is no longer relevant given the geopolitics of today. We have an opportunity to wake up to where we can be, how we can lead from an international perspective. It can begin with the strength of our energy and our energy resources, but we have to believe in our own possibilities. Right now, I think we are lagging in that.

I appreciate all that my colleague is doing in this effort to help educate people. I recognize that it takes a little bit of time to recalibrate the thinking, but we are doing that, and we are doing it for the right reason, based on common sense, based on strength of the economy, and based on national security, which should be our primary consideration right now. We will never have sufficient boots on the ground or budget for defense to be everywhere many would like to be around the globe. What other assets do we have? What else can we contribute? It can begin with our energy resources.

So we have great opportunities, and I forward to further discussions about not only what we are proposing in this amendment but how we can lead as a nation in the energy sector.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The Senator from Oregon.

FDA TOBACCO DEEMING REGULATIONS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I rise to draw attention to the dangers of new and insidious tobacco products that are ensnaring our youth and to urge the FDA to take long overdue action to protect our children from these products.

First, I thank the Senators for coming to the floor today to join in making this critically important point. Senator BOXER is present, and she will be speaking next. Other Senators are planning to join us. So I appreciate their lifting their voices on this important issue.

Dr. Richard Wender, the chief cancer control officer for the American Cancer Society, said last year, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the landmark Surgeon General report on smoking and health, that ''the single greatest threat to the future control of tobacco is complacency.''

We are here today to call attention to a dangerous complacency that threatens the lives of our children, a complacency in completing rules that are essential to protecting our children from a lifetime of nicotine addiction. We are on the floor of the Senate today because this week marks the 1-year anniversary of the Food and Drug Administration's proposed ''deeming regulations'' on tobacco. Deeming regulations essentially say the FDA has the power to do what the law gave them to do in 2009 when we passed the act. These critical regulations have yet to be finalized, and it appears that there are not going to be finalized regulations this month or next or the month after despite the fact that we are now 6 years into this rulemaking regulation process.

Six years is a very long time. In 6 years, a lot of young Americans have become addicted to nicotine products. In 6 years, the industry has made huge strides in inventing new products designed to attract our children. In 6 years, a lot could have been done, and nothing has been done.

These critical regulations have not been completed, and it is time for the FDA and the administration to make getting this done a priority. This is one of the things that can truly impact the health of the next generation.

The tobacco industry is, as Judge Kessler said in United States v. Philip Morris, ''an industry . . . that survives, and profits, from selling a highly addictive product which causes diseases that lead to a staggering number of deaths per year, an immeasurable amount of human suffering and economic loss, and a profound burden on our national health care system.''

That is why, when it comes to tobacco and public health, the best way to save lives 20 or 30 or 40 years down the line is to prevent young Americans from becoming addicted to tobacco products today. But Big Tobacco knows this as well. They know that the best way to create a lifelong, reliable customer for their deadly product is to get our children hooked as young as possible. Now the industry refers to our children as ''replacement smokers'' to replace those who are dying. That is why they are working day and night to come up with new strategies and new products to keep kids in the pipeline, to keep new replacement smokers coming forward. They use cigars, cigarillos, tobacco candy, and snus.

Now they have the real winner—e-cigarettes. These products, such as flavored cigars, cost as little as 99 cents and are sold in colorful or cool packaging and come in flavors such as bubble gum, cotton candy, wild cherry, grape, candy apple, blueberry, chocolate, peach, and gummy bear e-cigarettes. Many of these products are cheaper and more accessible than cigarettes, and the candy-flavored versions are preferred overwhelmingly by young people.

This is a chart which shows the bottles of liquid nicotine that fuel these e-cigarettes. We have everything here from cotton candy to coffee. You name it, it is there. These are not flavors designed to appeal to adults; this is all about forming addiction in our children.

A new study released by the CDC this month found, alarmingly, that e-cigarette use had tripled among middle and high school students in just 1 year. In 2011, 1.5 percent; it doubled in the course of a year to 2.8 percent. It increased substantially in the year 2012 and 2013, and then we see it soared. E-cigarettes and vape shops have exploded across the county, and that has profound consequences for our children. Nearly one in seven high school students has used an e-cigarette in the last 30 years. That is 2 million teenagers nationwide, 2 million of our children responding to this very deliberate targeting by this demonic industry.

We have the power to do something about this. The FDA has power to do something about this because we, the legislature, gave it to them in 2009.

It is true that the long-term health effects of smoking e-cigarettes are yet to be fully calculated because it is a newer product, but there are some troubling studies we should pay attention to. What we know today is that nicotine is highly poisonous and that this vast, unregulated market of nicotine liquids threatens public health immediately.

Since 2011, poison calls related to e-cigarettes have skyrocketed—271 in 2011 to 3,808 poison calls in 2014, again showing the exploding use of this product. This industry doesn't even put this liquid nicotine into childproof containers. One brand called JJuice looks like little bottles of juice. It says ''juice'' on it. Yet, it is deadly if a child takes off that cap and drinks it. There were 14 times more poisonings in 2014 than in 2011, and yes, people die. A toddler died of nicotine poisoning just last December, and there were lots of close calls.

But tobacco companies see opportunities in these unregulated markets. They see opportunities to appeal to kids directly, market to kids more easily, and to sell to kids with fewer barriers.

There is no Federal law in place about the age at which children can buy e-cigarettes or the liquids that go into them. So it has been up to local communities to try to fill in those gaps, and they have been trying to do so, trying to catch up with the problem. The industry of e-cigarettes has exploited these opportunities.

This is where we are. Time is ticking. E-cigarette use is rising. And the rising numbers on this chart aren't just numbers, they represent our children, kids who every day, when we don't act, are

more at risk for a lifetime of dangerous addiction. This is 100 percent unequivocally unacceptable.

So to the FDA, to Health and Human Services, and to the Obama administration, it is time to quit stalling. Children are getting addicted, children are dying, and children will die more from nicotine diseases in the decades ahead. It is unacceptable.

No more complacency. Let's get it done, have it be the top item you wake up to fix every day. We expect more. I urge the administration to act quickly. Let's get these rules done.

It is a pleasure to yield the floor to my colleague from California, who has been a tremendous champion on this topic and will provide her insights. I am so delighted that she is on the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I thank Senator MERKLEY for his leadership.

This is an issue which is not getting the attention it should be getting, and we hope today, with the series of speeches we will start to make now, to wake up America to this threat.

I have a bill that would ban the advertising of these cigarettes to children. Senator MERKLEY showed you and told you the names. Let's take a look at that again. Can anyone really tell you with a straight face that these marketers are not going after children? Cotton candy, gummy bear, and popsicle—those are the flavors. I mean, we really were not born yesterday. This is what they are doing.

This is a moment for us—parents, grandparents, loving aunts and uncles—to stand up and say no to this. There are ways to do it.

Before I get into those ways, I thank Senators CORKER and CARDIN for their extraordinary leadership on the underlying bill in Iran that is on the floor. I express my thanks to the entire committee, both sides of the aisle of the Foreign Relations Committee. I have been on that committee the longest of anyone else, and this was a tough time. Everyone had a different position, and everyone was in a corner. We all came together, and we crafted a delicate compromise that essentially allows the Senate and the House to vote on whatever agreement may emerge. I say ''may.'' We don't know if there will be one from the administration on Iran's nuclear weapons. We know that if we go down the path of poison pill amendments, this whole thing could be lost.

I will close this little part and get right to the e-cigarettes with this.

I was listening to Senator RUBIO, whom I work with on the committee, and I love to work with him on issues where we find agreement, but he got up here and he said: All I want is a vote on my amendment, and we all know his amendment will derail this very delicately balanced agreement. He said: All I am asking for is a vote. And he said very eloquently: If you don't want to vote, don't be a Senator. And I thought: You are right about that. Then I checked his voting record and he stopped us voting on nominees 18 times in December alone.

So I say to my friends: Don't come down here and preach to us about the fact that we are trying to keep poison pills off this for the good of the world, to stop a war; OK? And don't tell us we are stopping you, when you stopped a lot of us 18 times in December alone and once on Loretta Lynch—once on the new Attorney General. I had to say that.

Mr. President, when I turn on the television, I don't know if it is 2015 or 1950. Tobacco companies are preying again on our youth. Just as we should be celebrating the decline of youth cigarette smoking rates, a new product is taking our high schools and middle schools by storm and they are called e-cigarettes.

As Senator MERKLEY so well explained, we are seeing a startling increase in the use of these cigarettes by our teens, with 2.5 million teens using them—2.5 million teens. If we do nothing, the CDC says that every year another 1½ million kids are going to be using e-cigarettes.

Now, what are they exposed to? Let us be clear, nicotine. We know nicotine is very dangerous to adolescent brain development. Let me say that again. Nicotine is very dangerous to adolescent brain development. In addition to nicotine, e-cigarettes have—and I hope young people are listening, including the ones right here—potentially dangerous chemicals, and chemicals we already know are dangerous, such as benzene, cadmium, formaldehyde, propylene glycol, and they also have nanoparticles that are present in traditional cigarettes—this all according to my health department in California.

Now, we already saw how these children are lured. They are lured by the cigarette companies. And by the way, the big cigarette companies—and I will finish in 1 minute and this is critical—have bought up the e-cigarette companies. I wrote to the executives and I said: Please, for the good of your children and my children and my grandchildren, don't advertise on television.

If you ever saw these ads on TV, Senator MERKLEY, and Mr. President, you would just think that e-cigarettes were curing all the illnesses of the world. Well, they are not. They are not, and the studies that are already coming out are quite alarming. Sales to minors should be banned, and 42 of our States have done so, but it is not nationwide. Online sales should be banned. Companies should not be advertising.

We have a potential crisis on our hands, and I will be working with Senator MERKLEY, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and all of my colleagues because we were not born yesterday. We have seen this movie before and we want our kids to be healthy. The FDA can take a stand by finalizing the proposed regulation today. Too many lives have been endangered while we stand here waiting.

Last month, more than 5,000 of my constituents signed a petition urging FDA to regulate e-cigarettes. Some of them told me why they were concerned, and I would like to share the words of Californian parents and teachers.

Susan from Long Beach wrote:

> I am a 7th grade health teacher and it is clear that students think ''vaping'' is okay and a healthy alternative to smoking. Shops selling e-cigarettes have popped up in all the stores around their neighborhoods advertising their products. A clear message needs to be sent that e-cigarettes are not for children under the age of 18.

Judith from Fairfield wrote:

> I teach high school, and too many students are using e-cigarettes, thinking they are safer than regular cigarettes. In the meantime, they are getting addicted to nicotine, and putting them at risk for a lifetime of impacts to their health.

Sondra from Corona wrote:

> I have worked in our local high schools for almost 15 years. The e-cigarettes definitely need to be regulated for people under 18. I am consistently told by students that ''these are better'' than traditional cigarettes. They don't realize the harm and the addictive qualities are still present.

Bob from Cathedral City wrote:

> We need to know what health and/or safety dangers are associated with e-cigarettes.

And finally Julie from Huntington Beach wrote:

> My 14-year-old son was offered an e-cig. They are too easy for children to get.

My constituents deserve Federal oversight of e-cigarettes. To protect the public health and our children, I join my colleagues and urge the Administration to finalize the pending regulation. I also call upon Congress to advance legislation that protects consumers from the health consequences of e-cigarettes. The data does not lie. We cannot wait another day.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from California for her kindness and my apologies for all the talking in the background.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, we should be doing everything we can to ensure that our children are safe from products that harm their health. Thanks to life-saving public health interventions, and FDA regulation under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, we have seen reduced smoking rates among young people across the country. But, unfortunately, in recent years tobacco companies have found new ways to target children, through the promotion of e-cigarettes and other unregulated tobacco products.

Last year, the FDA took an important initial step toward regulating these products with its proposed tobacco deeming rule. But, we are here today, a full year later, without a finalized rule to help ensure tobacco companies aren't profiting off of selling our children an addictive, hugely harmful bill of goods.

Today, tobacco companies are marketing e-cigarettes with celebrity endorsements and cartoons that are

geared toward a younger audience—using tactics that they are banned from using to promote traditional cigarettes. They are producing kid-enticing candy and drink flavored products, which we know children are more likely to use. In fact, because they are unregulated, children can go online and buy them without their parents knowing.

Mr. President, it is unacceptable that e-cigarette companies are using the same tactics that tobacco companies used for years to promote smoking. So we should be doing everything we can to right this wrong, and prevent our youngest generation from becoming a new generation of smokers.

We know just how harmful and addictive these products can be and I am proud my home State of Washington has begun to regulate these products and is taking strong steps towards combatting their use among children.

But, there is still much more work to do to across the country to keep e-cigarettes and other unregulated tobacco products out of the hands of our kids, and that work starts with making sure the FDA finalizes its deeming rule.

So I stand with all of my colleagues today to urge the FDA to move quickly to finalize and implement last year's proposed rule, and put in place restrictions that would:

Prevent marketing targeted to minors,

Eliminate the sale of flavored e-cigarettes that appeal to children,

And end online sales.

These would be strong steps to further protect our children and I look forward to working with my colleagues, and the FDA to ensure they are implemented as quickly as possible.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I am glad to join with several of my colleagues to talk about electronic cigarettes and the Food and Drug Administration's, FDA, role in regulating these products.

Over the last year, e-cigarette use among high school students has tripled from 4.5 percent to 13.4 percent, according to recent CDC data. In fact, research from the University of Michigan's annual Monitoring the Future survey shows that in 2014 more teenagers reported using e-cigarettes than traditional tobacco products. One year ago, the FDA took an important initial step by proposing to regulate e-cigarettes, but more must be done to strengthen this rule and ensure that the same practices used by Big Tobacco for years to promote smoking are not used by e-cigarette companies to create a new generation of smokers.

I am pleased that the FDA has proposed prohibiting e-cigarette sales to minors, as well as prohibiting vending machine sales and free samples, to prevent sales and use by minors. Further, the proposed FDA rule requires e-cigarette manufacturers to list product ingredients and for tobacco products containing nicotine to carry an addiction warning label. While I commend FDA on proposing these important steps, the rule must be improved to address the marketing of these products to children and e-cigarette flavorings and be finalized as soon as possible. Indeed, I sent a letter last week with nine of my colleagues—many of whom are also speaking about e-cigarettes today—urging the FDA to strengthen and finalize this rule.

E-cigarette companies are taking a page out of the Big Tobacco playbook, using celebrity endorsements of their products, cartoons, and advertising in magazines with youth readership and at music festivals and sports events targeted at children. According to a 2014 study in the journal Pediatrics, exposure to e-cigarette marketing by children aged 12 to 17 increased by 256 percent between 2011 and 2013, exposing 24 million children to e-cigarette advertisements. In this context, it is unsurprising that youth use of e-cigarettes has skyrocketed during the same timeframe. It is well known that tobacco advertising influences consumer behavior, especially that of children, so it is my hope that the final e-cigarette deeming rule will address this issue.

As for the use of candy, soft drink, fruit, and other flavors in e-cigarettes, the FDA itself acknowledged in the proposed rule that children are the most likely to be attracted by and use these flavored tobacco products. The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act prohibits these kinds of flavorings from being used in traditional cigarettes and that same scrutiny should be applied to e-cigarettes and refill liquids so that children are not attracted to these products.

We have come a long way since I proposed legislation in the late 1990s to deny tobacco companies tax deductions for advertising to children. I was an original cosponsor of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which became law in 2009 and incorporated the goals of my bill to keep the tobacco industry from targeting children as new customers. This law provides the FDA with the explicit authority to protect the public from deceptive cigarette advertisements, prevents the targeting of minors, and removes certain harmful ingredients from cigarettes.

This was an important effort. But we must be ever vigilant and continue to address new tobacco-related concerns as they arise, such as e-cigarettes. Until the deeming rule is finalized, e-cigarettes will continue to operate completely unregulated, with an increasing number of children taking up this addictive habit every day. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on the issue and I join them in strongly urging the FDA to strengthen and finalize the e-cigarette deeming rule quickly so that the agency can begin regulating these tobacco products.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time until 5:25 p.m. today be equally divided in the usual form and that it be in order to call up the following amendment: Barrasso No. 1147; further, I ask that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the amendment; that there be no second-degree amendments in order to the amendment and that there be a 60-affirmative-vote threshold for the adoption of the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1147 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1140

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator BARRASSO, I call up amendment No. 1147.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Tennessee [Mr. CORKER], for Mr. BARRASSO, for himself, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. RISCH, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. LEE, Mr. CRUZ, and Mr. SASSE, proposes an amendment numbered 1147 to amendment No. 1140.

Mr. CORKER. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require a certification that Iran has not directly supported or carried out an act of terrorism against the United States or a United States person anywhere in the world)

On page 17, between lines 21 and 22, insert the following:

''(v) Iran has not directly supported or carried out an act of terrorism against the United States or a United States person anywhere in the world; and

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I certainly appreciate the hard work done by Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN and their efforts on getting this bill to the floor in a bipartisan way through the committee and bringing it up for a vote.

The amendment I am bringing today is something that was in the bipartisan agreed-upon bill that was introduced in the first place, with nine Democratic cosponsors. Then, this specific component, dealing with terrorism and the certification of terrorism, was removed in the managers' package as it went to committee. So I think it is important and there is bipartisan support for what I am doing. This amendment basically restores—restores—the terrorism certification that was in the original bipartisan Senate bill.

Every 90 days, the President will be required under this amendment to certify to Congress that Iran has not directly supported or carried out an act of terrorism against the United States or against an American citizen anywhere in the world. If there is evidence of terrorist activity by Iran against us, then Congress will have a more streamlined process to address it.

Right now there a number of different reports that have to be made to Congress as a result of this bipartisan legislation. This was the only one that

was removed in the managers' package. I think it is very important the American people get regular certifications from the President on this important point. Congress and the American people need to know if Iran is directly supporting acts of terrorism against our country and our people. If they are, I believe Congress must have an opportunity to respond quickly.

There actually have been some changes in the legislation to require some additional reporting components with relation to terrorism. I agree it is an improvement, but reports to Congress with information and evidence of Iran's terrorist activities are critically important, and I think it is even more critical for the President of the United States to acknowledge Iran's actions and for Congress to be able to have the opportunity to respond quickly. That is why I believe this amendment is so important.

Congress can always do more to ensure the safety and security of our citizens, but we must make it clear to Iran that Congress will be able to respond immediately to terrorist actions against us. I am restoring this opportunity with my amendment and recommending an ''aye'' vote.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first, let me thank Senator BARRASSO for the way he has worked with our committee, the way he has worked with us on the floor to get this amendment pending. We had a chance to debate this amendment yesterday, and today we have debated it. So I think the issue has been well debated.

I certainly agree with the intent of the sponsor of the amendment. As a result of his work in our committee, we have strengthened the reporting requirements on Iran's terrorist activities, which I have read into the RECORD before. It is very strong, and it has been strengthened as a result of the managers' amendment that Senator CORKER and I worked on.

We also have an assessment on Iran's human rights violations. We make it clear that nothing in an agreement would affect the sanctions imposed against Iran for its terrorist activities, its ballistic missiles or its human rights violations. So all those tools are available to us.

I object to this amendment because it affects the underlying bill itself. It jeopardizes the bill because it requires the President to make a certification that, in fact, he will probably not be able to make. Therefore, it not only jeopardizes the bill, it jeopardizes the ability to have a negotiated agreement and it weakens our position internationally and makes it less likely we can get Iran to give up its nuclear weapons program.

For all those reasons, I urge my colleagues to vote no on the amendment. We have already covered this in the notice requirements that have been provided in S. 615. It is an issue we all care about. This amendment, though well intended, would not advance it, and I urge my colleagues to defeat the amendment.

I yield back all of our time.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI).

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

The result was announced—yeas 45, nays 54, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 168 Leg.]

YEAS—45

Ayotte	Fischer	Portman
Barrasso	Gardner	Risch
Blunt	Grassley	Roberts
Boozman	Heller	Rounds
Burr	Hoeven	Rubio
Capito	Inhofe	Sasse
Cassidy	Isakson	Scott
Cochran	Johnson	Sessions
Collins	Kirk	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Crapo	McConnell	Tillis
Cruz	Moran	Toomey
Daines	Murkowski	Vitter
Ernst	Paul	Wicker

NAYS—54

Alexander	Franken	Murphy
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Murray
Bennet	Graham	Nelson
Blumenthal	Hatch	Perdue
Booker	Heinrich	Peters
Boxer	Heitkamp	Reed
Brown	Hirono	Reid
Cantwell	Kaine	Sanders
Cardin	King	Schatz
Carper	Klobuchar	Schumer
Casey	Leahy	Shaheen
Coats	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Corker	McCain	Udall
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Durbin	Menendez	Warren
Feinstein	Merkley	Whitehouse
Flake	Mikulski	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Enzi

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is rejected.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, as we discuss the Iran nuclear agreement and the President's administration is attempting to negotiate the agreement, I come to the floor of the Senate to remind Coloradans, and indeed Americans, about some of the activities that have taken place in our relationship with Iran over the past several decades.

Following the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the ruling mullahs held 52 American diplomats hostage for 444 days, releasing them only on January 20, 1981, the day that President Ronald Reagan was sworn into office. Two years later, on April 18, 1983, a truck ladened with explosives rammed into the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 17 Americans. On October 23, 1983, there was a similar attack on the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut which killed 241 American servicemen. Overwhelmingly, the evidence led to Iran and its wholly owned subsidiary Hezbollah as the perpetrator of these attacks.

Several weeks ago, we had the opportunity to visit with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Israel to discuss the negotiations that were taking place and the details of the negotiations. Those details have emerged in a couple of pages of documents which were released by the White House. But they are still lacking in great detail and in the specifics of the framework.

Prime Minister Netanyahu described the negotiations to be a dance of porcupines in the Middle East. There is concern about the negotiations and where they would lead. Indeed, the Prime Minister made the comment that Iran is now putting its finger on the jugular of the world. Over the past 24 to 48 hours, we have indeed seen that happen in the Strait of Hormuz and with the boarding by Iran of a cargo ship that falls under the protective umbrella of the United States of America.

So we continue to see an Iranian regime that has not changed in more than 30 years. It has not changed in the last 48 hours. They have targeted and killed Americans during the Iraq war, supported Shiite militias, and supplied deadly explosives that have been used to kill and target our troops. Iran continues to prop up the murderous Assad regime in Syria. They regularly threaten to wipe Israel off the map and abuse the human rights of their own people. They have imprisoned Americans, reporters, and refused to release them.

There is no doubt that we must avoid a nuclear Iran and do everything in our power to make sure that Iran doesn't possess a nuclear infrastructure. But the questions that we have today lead more and more to a conclusion that they will continue to maintain a nuclear infrastructure.

Secretary Schultz and Secretary Kissinger made it very clear in an op-ed they wrote for the Wall Street Journal several weeks ago. We have entered this negotiation and somehow siloed off or bifurcated the issue of political restraint with nuclear restraint. We have somehow decided we will have tunnelvision on one issue without acknowledging, admitting or negotiating the other acts of violence, death, and destruction that the Iran regime has pursued for not just 30 years ago, not just 15 years ago, and there is also what is happening around the world and in the Middle East today.

I hope we can emerge from these negotiations with a strong deal, a deal that allows us the inspection of military bases without question upon demand, and with the fact that we will remove their nuclear infrastructure, that we can assure that they are no longer a regime that is leading state-

sponsored efforts to wipe Israel off the map, and that we can indeed protect Americans from the reign of terror that has been a state-sponsored effort.

There is nothing less that we should ask of this administration or any administration. We need to protect the American people. At the negotiating table—when we sit 2 or 3 feet across from the people with whom we are negotiating—we cannot ignore what is happening through state-sponsored terrorism. We cannot ignore the cargo ships in the Strait of Hormuz that have been stormed. We cannot ignore what has happened in Yemen or Hezbollah. We cannot ignore the reality that we face today of an Iran that has not changed in 30 years.

The fact is our sanctions have worked, and the fact is that increased sanctions could work as well. I hope before this negotiation is signed off and agreed to, they will realize who is making the negotiations happen and possible and that more needs to be done to protect Americans and protect the world from an Iran that simply doesn't have a dangerous threat posed to us from nuclear weapons but which poses the danger through state-sponsored terrorism which they continue to pursue today.

I thank the Presiding Officer for the time.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

REMEMBERING MICHAEL W. DOWNING

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize the exceptional service and the extraordinary life of Rockingham County High Sheriff Michael ''Mike'' W. Downing of Salem, NH, who passed away recently following his battle with cancer.

Sheriff Downing was a knowledgeable, respected and compassionate public safety professional, a problem solver, and a concerned community member. He was one of a kind, and was beloved by everyone who knew him.

Raised in Salem, Mike attended Saint Joseph's School and graduated from Salem High School in 1972. He went on to serve our Nation as a member of the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division, after which Mike began what would be a long career of service to the State of New Hampshire, first as a N.H. State trooper after graduating from the 47th New Hampshire Police Academy. He continued his career in law enforcement service, joining the Salem Police Department where he rose to the rank of detective sergeant. Mike was a graduate of the Command Training Institute at Babson College, and earned an associate's degree from Southern New Hampshire University and a bachelor's degree from Franklin Pierce College.

After his retirement from the Salem Police Department, Mike continued his public service through his work in the State legislature. He served three terms as a State representative and then served two terms as a State senator, where he held the position of senate minority leader. In 2010, Mike returned to his law enforcement roots and was elected the High Sheriff of Rockingham County. Downing was serving in his third term as sheriff at the time of his passing.

In addition to his professional and elected service to the State of New Hampshire, Mike was very active in his local community. He gave generously of his time and energy as the 301st captain commanding of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, an ASA Salem softball coach, a NH Little League coach, a member of the Knights of Columbus, trustee of Amvets Post 2, a past president and board member of Salem Haven Nursing Home and Silverthorne Adult Daycare, a member of the Rockingham County Law Enforcement Association, Rockingham County Chiefs of Police Association, International Chiefs of Police Association, the National Sheriffs' Association, the NH Sheriffs' Association and a founding board member of Isaiah 58, a nonprofit organization focused on helping the homeless population of Rockingham County.

Most recently, he was honored as the 2015 recipient of the Chief John P. Ganley Community Service Award which is presented to an individual ''who has exhibited concern, involvement and leadership in the community of Salem; while providing inspiration to others, through his or her dedication, integrity and courage in the manner exemplified by Chief John P. Ganley during his life on earth.''

Sheriff Downing leaves behind the love of his life, his wife Heidi Downing and their five children, Jennifer, Jessica, Kaitlin, Kelsey, and Michael along with six grandchildren, Charlotte, Bella, Jacob, Logan, TJ, and Max. He also leaves his parents, Delbert and Teresa Downing. We are all deeply saddened by the loss of our friend Mike, an extraordinary man and proud New Hampshire son who served our State and Nation with honor, courage, and dedication. He represented the very best of our State, and I ask my colleagues to join me in sending Heidi and her family our deepest condolences and our gratitude for Mike's life of service to the people of New Hampshire.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator SANDERS and I be permitted to engage in a colloquy.

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

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, last week marked an important step as we worked in a bipartisan manner to improve the lives of survivors of trafficking. We were able to move the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act forward and help provide direct supports and services for these survivors, thanks to support from the Community Health Center Fund.

Community health centers are the safety net providers of our health care system. In my home State of Washington, they provide full health care services for working families across the State, and they work tirelessly to ensure that individuals get the supports and services they need. Community health centers help keep health care costs down and keep people out of the emergency room by improving health outcomes for the populations they serve.

Our community health centers were strengthened by the work in the Affordable Care Act, and I am proud that we were able to once again work together to strengthen them as part of the Medicare and CHIP Reauthorization Act earlier this year.

This was a very unique circumstance, and it is not a precedent for Congress to draw on the Community Health Center Fund for other purposes. It is my hope and intention that this was the one and only time Congress draws money from the health center fund to pay for other programs. This funding was intended to keep the health centers program whole so that more than 1,300 health centers nationwide can continue to provide access to care for their patients for the next 2 years.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as you know, I have worked for many years to ensure all Americans have access to primary care. Community health centers are instrumental in providing that access to primary medical, oral, and mental health care. Right now, community health centers provide primary care to 24 million patients in 9,000 underserved communities in every State and territory across the country.

Until last month, health centers were facing a 70-percent reduction in funding this fall due to the expiration of the Community Health Center Fund. On an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis, I was very pleased that Congress was able to extend the health center fund in the Medicare and CHIP Reauthorization Act bill for 2 years to avert this massive cut to the program.

Although I supported legislation to provide funds for victims of trafficking, taking money recently allocated to community health centers in the SGR bill to pay for health care services for victims of trafficking was not a good solution. Both of these programs serve important populations with significant health care needs, and I understand from those who negotiated this agreement that the funding transfer was a special circumstance as a way to move forward on this bill.

It is my hope and understanding from the bill sponsors that this was the one and only time Congress draws money from the Health Center Fund to pay for other programs.

Mrs. MURRAY. I am proud of the progress we have been able to make for survivors of trafficking and that we were able to use community health centers funding to help this very vulnerable population at a time when they need it the most.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator CASEY and I be permitted to engage in a colloquy.

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

63RD NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, earlier this year, Senator CASEY and I had the honor of serving as the cochairs of the National Prayer Breakfast. The annual event is a longtime tradition that celebrates the importance of faith and fellowship in our lives. This year's breakfast featured moving prayers, songs, and speeches from a number of notable guests, including race car legend Darrell Waltrip.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, Senator WICKER and I would like to thank all of the individuals who were involved in making the 2015 National Prayer Breakfast a great success. Thousands of people from across the country and world participated, including President Obama and His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

On behalf of Senator WICKER and myself, I ask unanimous consent that the full transcript be printed in the RECORD.

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

63RD NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2015, WASHINGTON, DC, CO-CHAIRS: SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR., SENATOR ROGER F. WICKER

The Honorable ROGER F. WICKER: Good morning, everyone. I am Senator Roger Wicker from Mississippi, and together with my colleague, Senator Bob Casey from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we welcome you to the 63rd Annual National Prayer Breakfast.

It is an honor to serve with Bob as cochairman this year, and we thank you for joining us this morning. Each year this event is one of the most special and memorable in Washington. Today, some 3,500 of us have gathered in this ballroom and in auxiliary rooms down the hall. We represent all 50 states and 130 nations. As the Psalm says, ''Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for Thou shall judge the people righteously and govern the nations of the earth. Let the people praise Thee, oh God. Let all the people praise Thee.'' So, for the 130 nations represented in this room today—be glad, be joyful, and praise God.

Since 1953, the National Prayer Breakfast has exemplified and celebrated the power of prayer and fellowship in our lives. We come together as Ephesians 5:19 directs us, ''Addressing one another in Psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.''

We have a truly remarkable program with guests and performers this morning. Like our weekly prayer breakfasts in the Senate and the House, we will have Scripture, prayers, songs, and speakers sharing their stories and reflections. Our hope is that you leave today with new blessings and perspectives about the strong community of faith in this country and around the world.

The Honorable ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.: My name is Bob Casey and I'm honored to be here this morning with my co-chair, Roger Wicker, my friend who has labored with us these two years. Roger, we're grateful for your work.

In just a few minutes we'll have the opportunity to give a warm welcome to the President and the First Lady when they arrive. And in the meantime, we hope you are enjoying your breakfast and getting to know those at your table, if you don't know them already. We're honored you're with us.

And now to lead us in our first prayer, I'm happy to welcome Rabbi Gregory Marx to the podium. For more than twenty-five years, Rabbi Marx has been the spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Or in Maple Glen, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. We are grateful that he is with us today. And he will do our prayer and then we'll have a break, and then we'll go to the second part of the program. Rabbi Marx.

Rabbi GREGORY S. MARX: Thank you, Senator. Good morning.

The Biblical prophet, Micah proclaimed: It has been told you what is good, and what the Lord requires of you, only to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. Justice without mercy leads to harsh judgment. Mercy without justice creates a world where there's no accountability, no moral goodness. At this moment, may God bless us with both mercy and justice so that we may tenderly care for those in need of compassion and rejoice in the good of others. We celebrate this morning our uniqueness as well as our commonality. We come from our different faith perspectives, yet are united in a fervent desire to strengthen the hands and the hearts of those who seek to build an enduring society, which tolerates neither bigotry nor hatred. Master of the universe, inspire us to release those reservoirs of spirit and mind which make us truly partners with you. Grant us patience and hopefulness in our daily tasks. May we never give in to despair, despite their enormity. Give us love for truth above cleverness, for people above things, for God above all else. Remind us in the immortal words of Abraham Lincoln, that religious devotion is not about having God on our side, which mistakenly prompts us to condemn the faith of others, but rather it is about being on God's side, which requires devotion to civic duty, tolerance, humility, justice, mercy, and peace. Be with us, oh God, as we seek to establish new ties of friendship across religious, racial, and ethnic boundaries, to create innovative opportunities of service, to rejoice in the growth of all of our children. And to lovingly and faithfully support our fellow men and women who are in need of God's care and affection. May God bless our beloved and noble country and those who defend her, so that each may one day sit under their own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid. Give us, oh God, the good sense and understanding to buttress the moral fiber of American life, that we may gird ourselves with integrity, and to successfully meet the immense challenges before us. Keep us, oh God, from pride which prevents us from seeing the need for real change and steel us with a commitment to stay the course when necessary. Most of all, oh God, shield us from impatient judgment towards those who differ from us. May we always remember that you are exalted, oh God whenever and wherever men and women work together to fulfill Micah's prophetic vision of justice, mercy, humility. And let us say, Amen.

Senator WICKER: Thank you Rabbi Marx. At this point, continue enjoying your breakfast and the conversation with our table guests. The President and his party will be here in a few moments.

[Applause]

Senator CASEY: May everyone have a seat. Thanks very much everyone. We're honored that the President and the First Lady are with us. As Senator Wicker and I said earlier, we're honored you're with us this morning, and we're grateful for the folks who helped put this breakfast together every year.

I'm honored to share with everyone in this audience an excerpt from a message from Rome, by Pope Francis. This message is to all of us gathered here at this National Prayer Breakfast, and he writes in part, and I quote:

''Dear Friends, I send prayerful good wishes for you, for the fruitfulness of your work. I ask you to pray for me, and to join me in praying for our brothers and our sisters throughout the world who experience persecution and death for their faith. Upon you, your families, and those whom you serve, I cordially invoke God's blessings of wisdom, joy, and peace.''

We're honored that the Holy Father would send us that message. The entirety of the message will be read at today's luncheon. While Pope Francis couldn't be with us today in person, His Excellency the Papal Nuncio, the Holy Father's representative in the United States is here today and we're honored by his presence.

All of us, as well have the extraordinary privilege today to be joined at this breakfast by another inspirational spiritual leader and peacemaker, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We're honored by his presence. [Applause]

When I was in state government in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, I worked in the finance building, and right over the building in the front of the building, was an inscription that I think is a good summation of what it means to be in public service. And I'm quoting from that precept inscribed on the building—here's what it says: ''All public service is a trust given in faith and accepted in honor.'' Senator Wicker and I, and those who are in the room who are elected officials, have accepted that honor to serve. We also feel privileged. I know this is true of Roger, and me, and so many others, but we're privileged to do our work in the Senate, but the excessive partisanship and politics that occurs in this town too often gets in the way and divides the Senate. That's why the weekly prayer breakfast on Wednesdays, on every Wednesday that the Senate is in session, is a way for us to have an oasis from the politics of the place. We gather at that breakfast for prayer and to share some time with each other every Wednesday morning—just as we're doing this morning with people from so many different states, different countries, backgrounds, faiths, and beliefs. We're reminded this morning of the journey, the journey of faith that we're all on, and we believe that faith is a gift, and a gift that we're blessed by today and express gratitude. Senator Wicker. [Applause]

Senator WICKER: Thank you, Bob. The Senate prayer breakfast dates back to World War II when a group of legislators met in the Senate restaurant. We can only imagine the conversations that took place during those early days as the deadliest conflict in human history swept the globe. Then as now, the weekly meetings which occur when the Senate is in session have remained largely low profile. In January of 1943, an article from

the Washington Post describes them as without fanfare, front-page publicity or ballyhoo, and that is still true. In many ways our prayer breakfast is a welcome sanctuary from the politics and the partisanship we hear about. Each week we sing a hymn, we hear prayer requests that we call the ''sick and wounded report.'' We actually join hands and we pray together. And we hear a presentation from one of our members, but not before a very thorough introduction of that member by either Senator Mike Enzi or Senator Jim Inhofe. Now, Senator Inhofe and Enzi are here today, and I think it's high time that something be said about their introductions. Everything we do at the prayer breakfast is off the record, but this needs to be said about Senator Enzi and Senator Inhofe's introductions. Neither opposition research professionals nor the FBI have a thing on Enzi and Inhofe when it comes to background checks. Mike and Jim relentlessly call former classmates, teachers, old friends, and relatives to discover something a little unusual about each week's presenter. Sometimes I wince. Sometimes I cringe. But the introduction always ends on a high note with a verse of Scripture and the suggestion that our speaker is much like a Biblical character of old. Thank you for that, Jim. Thank you for that, Mike.

And then we hear from the Senator himself or herself, a Democrat one week, a Republican the next week. What we learn about each other is a lot. During my time in the Senate prayer breakfast, we've heard from our own American sniper, our own astronaut, he's here today, our own missionaries, and we've had several, and our own award-winning composer. From camp directors, to university presidents, we've heard the good and the bad. We've heard about difficult family backgrounds. We've heard about financial bankruptcy and home foreclosures, and we've heard about spiritual journeys, from the heights of achievement to really, really tough times. It has been said, ''There is so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us that it ill behooves any of us to find fault with the rest of us,'' and that is true about the attendees in the Senate prayer breakfast. In short, on Wednesday mornings we learn we are a lot like you, and you, and every other child of God, and almost always I come away with a blessing. This morning, I acknowledge and thank the people who have gone before Bob and me in the Senate prayer breakfast leadership over the period of six decades, and along with Bob, I'm honored to continue in their tradition.

Now at this time, it is my pleasure to recognize a few distinguished guests at our head table who will not be given the opportunity to speak. And I'll ask the next three ladies to stand and remain standing, Mrs. Stevie Waltrip, Mrs. Therese Casey, and Mrs. Gayle Wicker. Thank you for joining us, ladies. Thank you so much, you may be seated.

And it is my very special honor at this point to ask each of you to give our appreciation and love to the First Lady of the United States, Mrs. Michelle Obama. [Applause]

And now, it is a special privilege for me as a Senator from Mississippi to introduce a familiar face from home. Jasmine Murray is from Columbus, Mississippi. She has been a broadcast communication major at Mississippi State University. She was a finalist on American Idol. And she was a finalist in the Miss America Pageant where she proudly represented my home state of Mississippi. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Miss Mississippi, Jasmine Murray. [Applause]

Ms. JASMINE MURRAY: [Singing]

Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart feel lonely, and long for heaven and home,
When Jesus is my portion? A constant friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches over me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches over me.
I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free.
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches, I know He watches, I know He watches me.
I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free.
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.
His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.
He watches me. I know He watches me. He watches me.

Ms. MURRAY: Thank you.

Senator WICKER: Thank you! Jasmine, that was wonderful. Thank you, that was just great. I'm delighted to introduce our next guest. He's a former Mayor of San Antonio and current Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. As a member of the President's Cabinet, he represents the executive branch of the family while his twin brother, Joaquin, covers the legislative side as a member of the House of Representatives. Please warmly welcome to read from the Old Testament, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Julian Castro. [Applause]

The Honorable JULIAN CASTRO: Thank you. Thank you so much Mr. President for the great assist, good morning, and to Mrs. Obama, and to co-chairs Senator Casey and Senator Wicker, and to all of our distinguished guests. It's a great honor to join you on this day of prayer and of peace. Last week I had the opportunity to travel to Los Angeles where I met some of our nation's most vulnerable citizens, men and women living every day with homelessness. Although they have endured incredibly difficult circumstances, it was clear to me that they have never let their hardship extinguish their hope. I spoke with an older woman who spends her nights on a tattered quilt over cold concrete. Night after night, that wears on a person's body, yet this woman's spirit was unbroken and her faith is a true testament of strength and of grace. And it was this angel in the City of Angels, who reminded me that the true measure of our progress is how we care for those with the least.

The passage that I will read speaks to the hope we must preserve, the needs we must meet, and the common humanity that we must always honor. A reading from the book of Isaiah:

Is this the manner of fasting I would choose, a day to afflict one's self, to bow one's head like a reed and lie upon sack cloth and ashes? Is this what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is this not rather the fast I choose—releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke, setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke? Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and homeless into your house, clothing the naked when you see them and not turning your back on your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall be quickly healed. Your vindication shall go before you and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer. You shall cry for help, and he will say, ''Here I am.'' If you remove the yoke from among you, the accusing finger and malicious speech, if you lavish your food on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom shall become like midday.

Thank you, and may God bless you. [Applause]

Senator CASEY: Thank you, Secretary Castro. Our prayer for the poor this morning will be offered by Sister Mary Scullion, a woman who has devoted her life to service, advocacy, and of course, God. She is one of the founders of Project HOME in Philadelphia; I'm proud to say that today. Project HOME is a truly exceptional organization that does the important work of providing housing, employment opportunities, and medical care and education for the homeless and the impoverished. For her work, Sister Mary was named one of Time Magazine's world's 100 most influential people in 2009. Sister Mary.

Sister MARY SCULLION: It's an honor to be here, Mr. President and Mrs. Obama, thank you very much, and all honored guests. And greetings to everyone from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

God of compassion and justice, we humbly come before you with gratitude and a clear understanding that it is in you that we all find our home. For when we are rooted in your truth and grace, we are empowered to pray: thy kingdom come. We recall how through the ages, you've been a God of compassion, justice, and liberation, with a special love for the poor and the oppressed. We remember your servant Moses leading your people out of bondage. We recall Jesus, healing the sick and proclaiming good news to the poor. We recall those times in our own nation's history when moved by the promise of liberty and empowered by Your Spirit, courageous leaders worked to end slavery, to enfranchise women, to welcome immigrants, and to expand economic opportunity for all. Your constant revelation, God, is one of nonviolent liberation from anything that oppresses the human spirit. As we gather here, millions of your beloved children are suffering under the burden of poverty, oppression, and violence. Our prayers today can only be authentic if they compel us to act. Let us hear the cry of the loving parents struggling to provide for their children. Let us hear the cry of those all around our world impacted by violence, and those in our nation who suffer the wounds of gun violence. Let us hear the cry of millions of children whose magnificent gifts and possibilities are lost in under-resourced schools and economically plundered neighborhoods, condemning them to a life of persistent poverty. Let us hear the cry of our veterans suffering from the wounds of war, especially those who are homeless. Open our eyes, Lord, so we can see suffering as a prophetic sign that calls us to radical transformation. God, we know that our faith does not give us answers; it gives us courage. As a people of faith, we pray for the courage to live truthfully, justly, and compassionately. Help us to see through our hypocrisy and falsehood, empower us to stand squarely on the side of those who are poor and struggling on the margins. Help us to move beyond our ideological polarizations and economic disparities. Form us into a united community that affirms each person's dignity and works towards a shared prosperity. Let us build a society free from the scourge of poverty, a society that truly reflects Your Kingdom. Most of all, let us understand that your ancient call for compassion and justice is in truth, an invitation to us for fullness of life, and richness of human community. As we meet the needs of those who are poor, we are healing ourselves and our nation. As we ensure that all families have enough to eat, we are building the banquet table for everyone. As we work to provide health care and education, we are making our whole society healthier and wiser. As

we bring those living on our streets home, we are finding our own way home because none of us are home until all of us are home. Fill us with that same spirit of liberation that filled Jesus and the prophets. Fill us with that spirit of joy, of hope that inspired the prophet Isaiah in his powerful challenge. If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness and your night will become like the noon day. God of compassion, God of justice, fill us with this yearning and give us the strength, the grace, the courage to make it real each and every day as we pray: thy kingdom come. Amen. [Applause]

Senator WICKER: Thank you, Sister Mary. A few minutes ago when I said, ''Perhaps someone within the sound of my voice could come to my assistance,'' I guess that did include you, Mr. President. Though I thought perhaps someone else would step forward, but thank you young man for figuring that out.

I first became involved in the Prayer Breakfast as a House member, and I'm delighted today to introduce to say a few words, the co-chairs from the House Prayer Breakfast. Congressman Robert Aderholt, serving his 10th term from Alabama, and Congressman Juan Vargas, serving his second term from California, are the co-chairs in the House, and by virtue of that, they will be the co-chairs of the next breakfast, the 64th Annual National Prayer Breakfast. Ladies and gentlemen, Robert Aderholt and Juan Vargas. [Applause]

The Honorable ROBERT B. ADERHOLT: Good morning. It's a real honor for Juan and myself to be here on behalf of the House breakfast, which meets every Thursday morning at eight o'clock, about this time in the Capitol, when the House is in session. The House of Representatives weekly prayer group meets and we come together as Democrats and Republicans. We come together once a week, not promoting a party; we're not promoting a particular issue, or a particular agenda. I'm a Republican from Alabama, Juan is a Democrat from California but we come together that one hour during the week to promote Jesus.

We're told in John 3 that Jesus said, ''Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the son of man must be lifted up . . . that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'' And that is what we promote during that week—Jesus of Nazareth. And we are honored to be here this morning. We're glad to be here with our colleagues and all of our friends, and our family from literally around the world and it is an honor to work together in a bipartisan effort and to work as I say, with our colleagues and especially this year to work with my colleague, Juan Vargas from California. [Applause]

The Honorable JUAN C. VARGAS: Thank you, and greetings from the Prayer Breakfast. Mr. President, it was great to see the assist that you gave today. We went to law school together, played against him a couple times in basketball, he didn't assist like that. It was a little rougher out there. That was great to see.

We do come together every Thursday morning and we call it the best hour of the week. We come together as Democrats and Republicans. Who would have guessed—a California Democrat and someone from Alabama who is a Republican? But we come together and we pray, and we bring Jesus into our prayers and we lift up the country, we lift up the Congress. And we know that special things can happen, and they do. And because of that, I think we're all here today and appreciate very, very much the prayers that you all have for us. We know that you pray for us throughout the country. I've gone to many, many services where we hear that you pray for your leaders, you pray for the President, you pray for all of us in public office. And we love that and understand that, and we bring those prayers up too. So again, thank you very much. And for all of my colleagues, I invite you to come and pray with us every Thursday morning. It's the best hour of the week from eight in the morning until nine, and it really is something special. You get to meet people that you wouldn't otherwise. Who would have known that I would have loved Louie Gohmert? Louie Gohmert has been one of our leaders and it's just fabulous to come and pray with him. He brings us Jesus every Thursday, so thank you very much. It's an honor to be here. [Applause]

Senator CASEY: Thank you very much for the Members of Congress. I'm pleased to introduce The Honorable Deborah Lee James, the 23rd Secretary of the United States Air Force. She joins us today to offer a prayer for the leaders of our nation. Secretary James, of course is a distinguished leader in her own right for our nation's military, and has the responsibility of managing more than 690,000 Air Force personnel and a budget of 110 billion dollars. Please welcome Secretary Deborah Lee James. Madam Secretary. [Applause]

The Honorable DEBORAH LEE JAMES: Thank you so much, Senator Casey, Senator Wicker. It is truly an honor and a privilege for me to come before all of you today. Mr. President, Mrs. Obama, Senators, Congressmen, distinguished guests, friends and allies from around the world, may I please invite all of you to join me in a prayer for our national leaders.

Oh mighty God, it is in you that we trust. We ask for your blessings on our President, Barack Obama. Lord, grant him the wisdom and the vision to lead our nation toward a more just, peaceful, and prosperous world. Help him to keep the beacon of American freedom burning brightly as an inspiration to all who long to live free from fear, free from want, free to speak, and free to worship as they choose. We ask you also, Lord, to bless our First Lady, Michelle Obama. Strengthen her as she works to inspire all of America's children to reach higher and to live healthier lives, so that one day they will be ready to build strong families of their own, compassionate communities, and contribute to a better world. Please guide our Vice President, Joe Biden, Lord, and all the members of the President's cabinet. Grant to these and all others who serve and advise our President the grace to lean not only on their own understanding, but also to trust in you with all of their hearts. Lord, bless our lawmakers sent from every corner of America to form our Congress. Grant them the priceless gifts of insight, courage, and unity. Shepherd them by your spirit to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you. Grant our Chief Justice and all of our judicial leaders across the nation your wisdom, Lord, that they may judge the law impartially as instruments of your will. And very close to my heart, Lord, please, please protect our men and women in uniform and all who stand in harm's way to preserve the freedoms we cherish for our children and grandchildren. And as you watch over those serving far from home, also please encourage those who wait for their return, and comfort those who have suffered unspeakable losses. Lord, may the service and sacrifice of those who have gone before us, and the lives of the heroes who walk amongst us, let those individuals inspire the rest of us to give our country, and our communities, and our families the very best that we can with our wholeness of heart, particularly in these uncertain times. Being always mindful and grateful to you, Lord, for the many blessings that you have bestowed on us, Amen. [Applause]

Senator WICKER: Thank you, Madam Secretary. Thank you so much. As you can see from the program in front of you, our next speaker was to be King Abdullah II of Jordan. We all know the heartbreaking circumstances his country is experiencing at this point. They required that His Majesty King Abdullah return to Jordan. Our prayers are with the people of Jordan during this troubling time of crisis. The passage that King Abdullah was expected to read is from the New Testament, Luke 10, and I will read this passage at this point. Luke 10:

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus, ''Teacher,'' he asked, ''What must I do to inherit eternal life?'' ''What is written in the law?'' he replied. ''How do you read it?'' He answered, ''Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.'' ''You have answered correctly,'' Jesus replied. ''Do this and you will live.'' But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ''And who is my neighbor?''

In reply, Jesus said: ''A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was and when he saw him he took pity on him. He went to him and he bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine, and then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day, he took out two denarii and gave them to the inn keeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hand of robbers?''

The expert in the law replied, ''The one who had mercy on him.'' Jesus told him, ''Go and do likewise.''

May God add His blessing to the reading of His Holy Word.

Senator WICKER: At this point it is my pleasure to introduce to you our next guest. He too has been recognized by Time Magazine. For 2014, he was one of the persons of the year of Time Magazine. Dr. Kent Brantly and his colleagues became known as the Ebola fighters for their work saving lives and caring for those affected by this deadly disease. As a doctor with the Christian relief organization, Samaritan's Purse, Dr. Brantly contracted Ebola in Liberia. Now fully recovered, he gives thanks to God and to the power of prayer. Today he is with us to offer a prayer for the leaders of the world, please warmly welcome Dr. Kent Brantly. [Applause]

Dr. KENT BRANTLY: Let us pray. Our Father who art in heaven. The Lord, the Lord, the God of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness, lover of all peoples of the earth, there is no God like you in all of heaven above or on the earth below. You keep your covenant and show unfailing love to all who walk before you in wholehearted devotion. Hallowed by thy name. Remind us that all nations are as nothing before you, their governments but a shadow of passing age, all authorities are intended to be your servants, to do good to the people under their care and to ensure justice for those who have been wronged. But we all, including our leaders, will stand before your judgment seat, oh God, and as surely as you live, oh Lord, every knee will bow

and every tongue confess and give praise to you. Thy kingdom come on earth. Grant to thy children throughout the world, and especially to the leaders of the nations the gifts of prayerful thought and of thoughtful prayer that following the example of our Lord, we may discern what is right and do it. Bless the leaders of the nations that they may not walk in the council of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. Bless the leaders of the nations that they might delight in the law of the Lord, that they might meditate on it day and night that Thy will might be done on earth as it is in heaven. Help us, Lord to protect and to provide for all who are hungry and homeless, especially those who are deprived of food and shelter, family and friends. For true religion that is acceptable to you, oh Lord, is this, to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to flee corruption. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us for neglecting to seek peace and pursue it, and finding ourselves in each new crisis more ready to make war than to make peace, for choosing violence and war over peace and reconciliation. We have not loved you with our whole heart, and we have not loved our neighbors as our selves. Forgive us for neglecting the needs of our people, for choosing corruption and greed over integrity and generosity. Forgive us for oppressing the minority while the majority is filled with pride and self reliance. We have all sinned and fallen short of your glory, oh Lord. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Let us not seek revenge but reconciliation. Let us not delight in victory but in justice. Let us not give ourselves up to pride, but to prayer. Lead us not into temptation. Be present, Lord, to all your children. Be present to those who are killing, and to those who are being killed. Be present to the oppressed and to the oppressor. Be present to the leaders of the nations. Deliver us from evil. Subdue our selfish desires to possess and to dominate. Forbid us arrogance and victory, and self-pity, and defeat. Bless the leaders of the nations, Father, that they might act justly and love mercy, and walk humbly with you, oh God. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen. [Applause]

Senator WICKER: Thank you Dr. Brantly, and please pass along our good wishes to our friends at Samaritan's Purse. Ladies and gentlemen, the National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing, commonly known as NASCAR, is second only to the National Football League in terms of TV ratings in our country. NASCAR races are broadcast in over 150 countries. Our keynote speaker this morning is one of the best known figures in NASCAR. Simply put, Darrell Waltrip is one of the great race car drivers in history. In 1 Corinthians 9:24 we hear, ''Do you not know that in a race, all runners run.'' (The internal combustion engine had not been invented back then.) ''All runners run but only one receives the prize.'' Well, Darrell Waltrip has received that winning prize some 84 times. He's driven 809 races and 237,773 laps. His life story includes an important faith journey. I believe God has placed a message on Darrell's heart that can benefit us today. But first, let's see this clip from 1991 at the Daytona Speedway.

[Clip from Daytona Speedway, showing Darrell Waltrip's car crashing]

Senator WICKER: Well, he made it. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Darrell Waltrip. [Applause]

Mr. DARRELL WALTRIP: Let's go racing boys. I always chuckle when I see that clip because my insurance man says, ''Have you ever had an accident?'' I've had a couple. But good morning, Mr. President, First Lady, all of the distinguished guests, Congress members, everybody that's here this morning. This is a huge honor for a kid that grew up in Owensboro, Kentucky, and now resides in Franklin, Tennessee.

So, I knew about the Prayer Breakfast. I'd heard about it. It's been going on since the early 1940s, so I'd heard about it for a long time. But I have to tell you a quick story:

When the ''committee'' called me and asked me, ''Would I like to come have breakfast with the President?'' I said, ''Wow, they must know it's my birthday. What an honor to go to Washington, D.C., and have breakfast with the president. Oh, this is going to be great.'' ''And by the way, we'd like for you to be the keynote speaker.'' ''Ah, I'll get back to you on that.'' But I thought about it, prayed about it—and I've got a lot of really great friends that pray for me all the time—but I thought about it, Mr. President, and said, ''I've got it. I'm not a brain surgeon, and I'm not running for office, so I'm the perfect guy to be here this morning.'' [Applause]

I hope that was okay. My wife told me maybe I shouldn't say that, but she's sitting down there shaking her head now. But anyway, I'd like to introduce my family. You've already met my beautiful, redheaded wife Stevie. Jessica and Sarah, my two daughters, and their husbands, Fausto and Matthew, are out there, and it makes me feel so good to have them here this morning with me. I love my family, and I love the Lord.

If the room should start vibrating just a little bit—don't get excited, don't get nervous—it's just all my friends back in Franklin, Tennessee, my Tuesday morning Bible study group, all my friends over in Charlotte, North Carolina, at Motor Racing Outreach, our ministry at the track. All my friends are praying for me right now. And I don't know if you can feel it or not, but I certainly can, and I'm thankful for it. So if it starts shaking a little bit, it's okay. It's just the Lord. He's amongst us. [Applause]

Being here this morning reminds me of this: Before you start a big event as a driver, like the Daytona 500, which comes up in a couple of weeks on Fox, you go down on pit road, you get in your car—and quite honestly, I did it for 30 years but it never failed, always that adrenaline, those butterflies, being excited, nervous. Because when they dropped the green flag and they say, ''Let's go racing boys,'' you didn't really know what was going to happen. And so, that's kind of how I feel this morning. I really don't know what's going to happen here, folks. They kept asking me, ''Do you have an outline?'' I said, ''No, I've never really done an outline for a speech before.'' That's when they thought maybe I wasn't the right guy for this show.

I've got to tell you this. I probably shouldn't, but I'm going to: So, they call me up, and they tell me all the great speakers that have been here before. And as they went down the list, I said, ''Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait just a minute, boys. I'm just not sure I'm qualified for this job.'' And they said, ''Well, we kind of knew that going in.'' So, right away I knew I was in good company.

I think all of us in this room know that sometimes your biggest assets can be something that works against you. They can be a blessing and a curse, and that's really how racing was for me. It was sort of a blessing and a curse. I grew up in Owensboro, Kentucky. My dad drove a Pepsi-Cola truck. My mom was a cashier at the local grocery store. I had two brothers and two sisters. We didn't have a lot of money; we worked hard to put food on the table. And so, when I went to races as a six-year-old kid with my grandmother and came home and told Mom and Dad that someday I wanted to be a race car driver, they said, ''Good luck, son.'' My dad was a believer in hard work. He said, ''You know, if you really work hard, and that's what you want to do, then maybe someday you'll be successful.'' But that was about all the encouragement my dad gave me, because racing is expensive. It costs a lot of money to go racing, so we didn't have a lot of money. So, I had to figure out a way to make that happen. I became a self-promoter—in other words, I bragged a lot. God had given me a talent; there was no question about that. I don't know where it came from. There's no reason for me to be able to do what I did other than that was my passion, that's what I cared about. I tell kids every day—and Mr. President, you know this—there's nothing any more discouraging and disheartening when you ask a kid, ''What are you going to do when you grow up?'' ''I don't know.'' ''Really? Embrace something. You've got to have a passion.'' Well, my passion was racing, and quite honestly, I went at it all the wrong ways in the early years. I was just as aggressive off the racetrack as I was on. I didn't have a lot of friends. I didn't think I needed friends. I looked over in the car, and I was the only one ever in there, so I didn't need any friends to be with me. So, my relationships early on in my life were shallow. I didn't have any really close friends. Quite honestly, I looked back, and it's the hardest thing for me to do this morning—to look back—because when I look back, I see things that are disturbing to me. I can see things and say, ''How could I have felt that way? How could I have acted that way? How could I have been that way?'' But I was.

And you're going to love this. This is what people said about me: They said I was brash, ruthless—ruthless?—pushy, cocky, conceited, aloof, boastful, arrogant, and just downright annoying. I hope you don't feel that way this morning, but if you do, I'm sorry. And I've got to tell you, those were people that liked me. You could imagine what people who didn't like me had to say about me. The fans booed me when we'd have driver introductions. It would be just like if I got up this morning to speak, and they started booing. Instead of hollering ''boogity, boogity, boogity,'' they would start booing. Fans wore ''Anybody but Waltrip'' T-shirts to the track. They hated me. The drivers despised me. Richard Petty once told me: ''I don't know how you keep a sponsor. You're so unpopular with the fans; I don't know how you keep a sponsor.'' And this is Richard Petty. He's the icon of our sport. He's the king of our sport. I wanted to be king, but I went at it all the wrong ways, for sure. I was always arguing with NASCAR. I didn't like the rules, mainly because they never worked in my favor, so I was always trying to change the rules. We know guys like that, right? Always wanting to change the rules. [Laughter, Applause.] I always like to say I fought the wall, [and] the wall won. I fought the law, and the law won. Those were the things that were going on at the track, and quite honestly, my personal life wasn't much better. I was so arrogant. I really was, and that's why I say it's the hardest thing for me to do. My kids are sitting out here for heaven's sake. But the hardest thing to do is to look back and see how you were. My personal life was a mess. I drank too much. I liked to go to the bars and hang out with the boys. I did everything to satisfy me. Whatever felt good to me, I did it; I didn't give it a second thought—that was my lifestyle, that's how I lived. Like I told you, I didn't have any great friends. I didn't have any close friends. Heck, I always figured if you wanted a friend, get a dog. I have several dogs.

But my wife, my beautiful wife, my redheaded wife whom I love dearly—we've been

married 45 years. [Applause] That in of itself is a miracle. She was married to that guy I was telling you about. She lived it. My wife once described me as this: that she had lived with two different men with the same name. And that might be a little confusing to you, and so obviously I must explain. But that first guy that I told you about, that was the guy she was married to originally. I knew God had his hand on me when I met Stevie. I didn't acknowledge it. I didn't necessarily follow through, but it's one of the few times in the early years of my life that I felt like God spoke to me. God said to me, ''I gave you this woman. I brought you this woman. Don't let her get away.'' And so, I tried to always be on my best behavior when I was around her, and certainly when I was around her mother and father, because they didn't think a whole lot about a race car driver. When her father asked me, ''How are you going to support Stevie?'' I said, ''I'm going to be a professional race car driver.'' He was the president of Texas Gas, and he didn't quite understand how a race car driver could make a living and be able to support his daughter. He wasn't sold on the idea at first but he became a big fan as time went by.

So, Stevie would always pray for me. She is a Godly woman, and she loved the Lord way before I did. And she would always pray that someday, somehow we would get involved in a Bible study or that I would, that I would get involved in a Bible study, or a church, or something. And I'd always kind of blow her off, and I'd say, ''Look honey, I race on Sundays. I don't have time to go to church. I'm busy all through the week getting ready for the next race. I just don't have time for this church stuff and this God stuff. I just don't have time, okay.'' And you know what she said? ''Well, I'll just keep on praying.'' And let me tell you, when somebody says they're praying for you, you better pay attention and don't take it lightly. People don't pray for you if they don't care about you and if they don't love you. [Applause.] Amen, amen. It used to happen to me at the track, and people would come up and say, ''I'm praying for you.'' And I'd say, ''Oh, thank you very much. I've got to go now.'' Don't ever do that. Embrace that person, because it's not a waste of time. It's them embracing you and caring about you, and that's the most important thing in the world is that we all care about each other.

I almost had us do this, and Stevie talked me out of it. At home when we pray, we hold hands. And in Bible study when we pray, we kind of lock arms or hold hands. I was going to ask everybody in the room to hold hands while we pray, but then I thought maybe you weren't that close just yet, so I kind of let that one go.

I got a great opportunity in 1983. I got a chance to drive for Junior Johnson. Junior Johnson was a childhood hero. He's the last American hero. They made a film about him. They wrote books about him. He was the last American hero. As a kid growing up in Owensboro, I listened to my little transistor radio, and Junior Johnson drove this white #3 Chevrolet with a 427 mystery engine. Junior Johnson, a moonshiner from Wilkesboro, North Carolina, car #3 with a mystery engine. I mean, that's hero material right there for a guy like me. So obviously, I thought maybe someday I'd get to meet him, but never thought that someday I'd get to drive for him. Those were the best years of my career—'81, '82 we won 24 races, 18 pole positions, 2 championships. But Junior was a no-nonsense kind of guy. He said, ''Let me tell you something, boy: When you come to drive for me, you work your hands and not your mouth.'' I said, ''Yes, sir.'' Because when Junior spoke, I listened. We had great times together. We won races together, but in 1983 I had a horrible wreck—worse than that one you saw there. I had a concussion. I went for a couple of weeks to the next couple of races, and I didn't even remember being there. And when I finally came to, or woke up, I realized that that wreck had knocked me conscious. It scared the hell out of me, and I mean that literally. I realized I could have been killed that day. What if I would have lost my life right there that day at Daytona? What would I have done? Would I have gone to heaven? Or would I have gone to hell? I thought I was a pretty good guy. But folks, let me tell you something: Good guys go to hell. If you don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, if you don't have a relationship, if He's not the master of your life, if you've never gotten on your knees and asked him to forgive you of your sins, you're just a pretty good guy or a pretty good gal. You're going to go to hell. Think about that. I did. And like I said, it was a wake-up call. It literally knocked me conscious.

Stevie and I started going to church. We met Dr. Cortez Cooper, one of the Godliest men—preached from the Bible, loved sports, a lot like the President. He could play any sport, he pretty much knew a little bit about every sport there was, and he knew me personally. And because of him, and him talking to me just like I'm talking to you this morning, every time I went to hear him preach, I felt like he was talking directly to me. And so, we met in a high school in Hillsboro, just outside of Nashville there while they were building a big sanctuary. It was July; it was hot, kind of like being in a race car—no air conditioning. I got down off my high horse, I got down on my knees, and Dr. Cortez Cooper and Stevie and I prayed that the Lord would come into my life and forgive me of my sins and be my Lord and Savior. And that was the greatest day of my life. [Applause]

That changed everything. I'll never forget: We were going home from that night, and I told Stevie, ''Man, I feel like the weight of the world has been lifted off of my shoulders. I feel like I've been born again. I feel like a new man.'' I felt different, and I knew I was different. When the Lord comes into your life, you're going to be different. You have to be different. If he comes into your heart, into your life, and you're not different, you better go back and try it again, because the Lord changes you. And He changed me, and it was for the better. And we left there that night, and did it fix all? Listen, you don't make a deal with the Lord: ''Hey Lord, if you do this, I'll do that.'' It don't work that way, folks. He's there for you. He's there to walk with you. But you've got to do your part, too. So did my life, my personal life, change things on the race track? I still had wrecks. I still had problems. Things still happened, but I wasn't in it alone. Where I felt like I was always in it by myself, now I had somebody to pray with, talk with, to guide me, direct me—the wisdom of the Lord. I had it, and I needed to use it.

Stevie and I wanted to have a family. We were having trouble having kids. We had a couple of miscarriages, and we were praying, ''God, can you give us a child?'' And we'd gotten to the point where we thought we'd just adopt. We're not going to be able to have kids on our own, so we'll adopt. And then Stevie got pregnant, and we prayed, and the Lord gave us peace about it. He said, ''Hang in there this time, I've got something special for you.'' And sure enough: Jessica Lee Waltrip. September the 17th, 1987, we had our first child. I, folks, was on cloud nine. I was so excited. I couldn't wait to get to the track. I left that weekend to go to Martinsville. I get to the racetrack, I'm a proud papa, and everybody's congratulating me because they knew how badly we wanted kids. I go over to my race car on Sunday morning, and in the seat of the car is a vase with one rose in it and a note. I pulled the note out, I opened it up, and it said, ''Win this one for me, Daddy.'' That was quite a moment. I'd never been called Daddy before, and I'd never been a father before, and I was so happy. And I have to tell you: This is a fairy tale. I never led a lap of that race. I wanted so badly to win that race for Jessica—never led a dadgum lap, until the last one—and you won't believe what happened. People say, ''Can you tell me a time when God showed up?'' I don't think he was working against those other guys, but he sure was working for me—I know that. We go off the last lap, the white flag's in the air, and I thought, ''Oh man, I'm running third.'' There's nothing I can do. Dale Earnhardt and Terry Labonte, they're a little bit quicker than I am. They go down the back straightaway into third turn at Martinsville, a little paperclip racetrack, and Terry bumps into the back of Dale. And when he does, both cars get a little loose, and they slide up the racetrack, and DW goes driving by. [Applause]

Daddy won that one. Same thing—1992, Sarah was born. Sarah Kaitlin Kerns Waltrip. Same deal: Go to the racetrack. It had been kind of a tough year. I dominated that race, Bristol half-mile track, like being hung up in a salad bowl for 500 laps. Spinning around—your head's hurting, your eyes are burning. I get out of the car, and I can't remember my daughter's name. So, I'm trying really hard. I'm saying ''Sarah, Sarah, Kaitlin''—she had a lot of names—''Kerns Waltrip.'' Because when I left the hospital, we really hadn't decided on exactly what her name was going to be. So, it took a little time, but it came to me, and certainly Sarah's never let me forget that I couldn't remember her name.

One final story for you, and it's about Dale Earnhardt Sr. And I don't know how many of you people knew the old intimidator. He was one tough customer and my biggest competitor. We were 'frenemies.' We were friends off the racetrack but not so much on the racetrack. And this beautiful redhead down here—she loved Dale, and Dale loved her. And she witnessed to him just as much as she witnessed to me. In 1994, Neil Bonnett lost his life at Daytona in a practice crash. Sunday morning, Stevie had always put Scriptures in my race car on a note card. Not good luck charms, just encouragement. Whatever happened that week, the Scripture sort of fit the events of that week.

We're standing on pit road praying with some of the chaplains from MRO, and Dale walks by. Now, Dale is one of those guys that you know he's a tough guy, so for him to pray or to acknowledge that he may have a relationship with the Lord was pretty hard for him to do. But he walks by, Stevie grabs him and says, ''Come and pray with us.'' We all huddled up on pit road there, and when we finished praying, Stevie hands me the note card with the Scripture on it, and Dale grabs it, and he says, ''What's that?'' And he read it. And he looked at Stevie, and he said, ''Where's mine?'' Oh my gosh, she ran to the pit box, got a note card, wrote a Scripture, put it on the note card, and ran back to Dale's car, and Dale put it on his dash. And so from that day until 2001, when he lost his life at Daytona, he had a Scripture in his car just like I had in my car. You have to know something: Me and this guy, we were fierce competitors. He didn't like me, and I didn't like him when we were on that racetrack. That woman would make us pray together. Stevie would grab him and grab me and say, ''I want you all to pray together,'' and we'd ''[makes mumbling noises].'' And then, and

then to make it worse, she'd say, ''Tell him you love him.'' [Laughter, Applause] So, as he was walking away and I was walking away: ''I love you.'' [stated in perfunctory tone]

As I said, the hardest thing about being here this morning was, as I prepared—and I did prepare—was looking back and remembering how I was. But the good news this morning is I'm not that way anymore. I just share this: You don't have to walk alone. You don't have to carry all those burdens like it's you against the world. You have to do like I did. You've got to get off your high horse and get on your knees and ask for forgiveness. He's waiting for you. He was there all the time. I just didn't know it or acknowledge it. I told you when I got up here I wasn't running for anything, but I will tell you this: I am running to something. The Lord is a strong tower; the righteous will run to it and be safe. God bless you. God bless America. God bless our President, and thank you for letting me share with you this morning. [Applause]

Senator CASEY: Darrell, thank you for that great message. Darrell, I want to ask your permission but I'll do this as I'm pretending to ask your permission. Your birthday is today?

Mr. WALTRIP: Yes.

Senator CASEY: It's also the same birthday as my mother-in-law, Nancy Foppiano, so I've just scored big points, Darrell, thank you very much. It's my honor now to introduce the President. Mr. President, First Lady Michelle Obama, we're honored you're with us, honored by your presence. And they've been here every year. So we're grateful to have them back. [Applause]

President Obama is a person of faith who has spoken often about his faith journey. His life has been, and continues to be, a life of service, public service, in the pursuit of justice here, at home, and around the world. My mother, Ellen Casey, (that way I've got my mother-in-law and my mother in the same remarks) always told us when we were growing up over, and over again, she would say, ''Count your blessings.'' Count your blessings. And I've tried to do that; probably don't do enough of it. But I know that the President is one who follows my mother's advice, especially about the blessings of his family. So today as we gather to pray and to express gratitude for so much on a morning like today, I count as one of our blessings, Mr. President, your good work as our President and your abiding commitment to your family, to your faith, and to our country. Ladies and gentlemen, the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama. [Applause]

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. Well, good morning. Giving all praise and honor to God. It is wonderful to be back with you here. I want to thank our co-chairs, Bob and Roger. These two don't always agree in the Senate, but in coming together and uniting us all in prayer, they embody the spirit of our gathering today.

I also want to thank everybody who helped organize this breakfast. It's wonderful to see so many friends and faith leaders and dignitaries. And Michelle and I are truly honored to be joining you here today.

I want to offer a special welcome to a good friend, His Holiness the Dalai Lama—who is a powerful example of what it means to practice compassion, who inspires us to speak up for the freedom and dignity of all human beings. I've been pleased to welcome him to the White House on many occasions, and we're grateful that he's able to join us here today. [Applause]

There aren't that many occasions that bring His Holiness under the same roof as NASCAR. This may be the first. But God works in mysterious ways. [Laughter] And so I want to thank Darrell for that wonderful presentation. Darrell knows that when you're going 200 miles an hour, a little prayer cannot hurt. I suspect that more than once, Darrell has had the same thought as many of us have in our own lives—Jesus, take the wheel. Although I hope that you kept your hands on the wheel when you were thinking that. [Laughter]

He and I obviously share something in having married up. And we are so grateful to Stevie for the incredible work that they've done together to build a ministry where the fastest drivers can slow down a little bit, and spend some time in prayer and reflection and thanks. And we certainly want to wish Darrell a happy birthday. [Applause] Happy birthday.

I will note, though, Darrell, when you were reading that list of things folks were saying about you, I was thinking, well, you're a piker. I mean, if you really want a list, come talk to me, because that ain't nothing. That's the best they can do in NASCAR? [Laughter.]

Slowing down and pausing for fellowship and prayer—that's what this breakfast is about. I think it's fair to say that Washington moves a lot slower than NASCAR. Certainly my agenda does sometimes. [Laughter.] But still, it's easier to get caught up in the rush of our lives, and in the political back-and-forth that can take over this city. We get sidetracked with distractions, large and small. We can't go 10 minutes without checking our smartphones—and for my staff, that's every 10 seconds. And so for 63 years, this prayer tradition has brought us together, giving us the opportunity to come together in humility before the Almighty and to be reminded of what it is that we share as children of God.

And certainly for me, this is always a chance to reflect on my own faith journey. Many times as President, I've been reminded of a line of prayer that Eleanor Roosevelt was fond of. She said, ''Keep us at tasks too hard for us that we may be driven to Thee for strength. '' Keep us at tasks too hard for us that we may be driven to Thee for strength. I've wondered at times if maybe God was answering that prayer a little too literally. But no matter the challenge, He has been there for all of us. He's certainly strengthened me ''with the power through His Spirit,'' as I've sought His guidance not just in my own life but in the life of our nation.

Now, over the last few months, we've seen a number of challenges—certainly over the last six years. But part of what I want to touch on today is the degree to which we've seen professions of faith used both as an instrument of great good, but also twisted and misused in the name of evil.

As we speak, around the world, we see faith inspiring people to lift up one another—to feed the hungry and care for the poor, and comfort the afflicted and make peace where there is strife. We heard the good work that Sister has done in Philadelphia, and the incredible work that Dr. Brantly and his colleagues have done. We see faith driving us to do right.

But we also see faith being twisted and distorted, used as a wedge—or, worse, sometimes used as a weapon. From a school in Pakistan to the streets of Paris, we have seen violence and terror perpetrated by those who profess to stand up for faith, their faith, professed to stand up for Islam, but, in fact, are betraying it. We see ISIL, a brutal, vicious death cult that, in the name of religion, carries out unspeakable acts of barbarism—terrorizing religious minorities like the Yazidis, subjecting women to rape as a weapon of war, and claiming the mantle of religious authority for such actions.

We see sectarian war in Syria, the murder of Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, religious war in the Central African Republic, a rising tide of anti-Semitism and hate crimes in Europe, so often perpetrated in the name of religion.

So how do we, as people of faith, reconcile these realities—the profound good, the strength, the tenacity, the compassion and love that can flow from all of our faiths, operating alongside those who seek to hijack religions for their own murderous ends?

Humanity has been grappling with these questions throughout human history. And lest we get on our high horse and think this is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ. In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ. Michelle and I returned from India—an incredible, beautiful country, full of magnificent diversity—but a place where, in past years, religious faiths of all types on occasion have, on occasion, been targeted by other peoples of faith, simply due to their heritage and their beliefs—acts of intolerance that would have shocked Ghandiji, the person who helped to liberate that nation.

So, this is not unique to one group or one religion. There is a tendency in us, a sinful tendency that can pervert and distort our faith. In today's world, when hate groups have their own Twitter accounts and bigotry can fester in hidden places in cyberspace, it can be even harder to counteract such intolerance. But God compels us to try. And in this mission, I believe there are a few principles that can guide us, particularly those of us who profess to believe.

And, first, we should start with some basic humility. I believe that the starting point of faith is some doubt—not being so full of yourself and so confident that you are right and that God speaks only to us, and doesn't speak to others, that God only cares about us and doesn't care about others, that somehow we alone are in possession of the truth.

Our job is not to ask that God respond to our notion of truth—our job is to be true to Him, His word and His commandments. And we should assume humbly that we're confused and don't always know what we're doing and we're staggering and stumbling towards Him, and have some humility in that process. And that means we have to speak up against those who would misuse His name to justify oppression, or violence, or hatred with that fierce certainty. No God condones terror. No grievance justifies the taking of innocent lives, or the oppression of those who are weaker or fewer in number.

And so, as people of faith, we are summoned to push back against those who try to distort our religion—any religion—for their own nihilistic ends. And here at home and around the world, we will constantly reaffirm that fundamental freedom—freedom of religion—the right to practice our faith how we choose, to change our faith if we choose, to practice no faith at all if we choose, and to do so free of persecution and fear and discrimination.

There's wisdom in our founders writing in those documents that helped found this nation, the notion of freedom of religion, because they understood the need for humility. They also understood the need to uphold freedom of speech, that there is a connection between freedom of speech and freedom of religion. For to infringe on one right under the pretext of protecting another is a betrayal of both.

But part of humility is also recognizing in modern, complicated, diverse societies, the functioning of these rights, the concern for the protection of theses rights calls for each of us to exercise civility and restraint and

judgment. And if, in fact, we defend the legal right of a person to insult another's religion, we're equally obligated to use our free speech to condemn such insults—[Applause]—and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with religious communities, particularly religious minorities who are the targets of such attacks. Just because you have the right to say something doesn't mean the rest of us shouldn't question those who would insult others in the name of free speech. Because we know that our nations are stronger when people of all faiths feel that they are welcome, that they, too, are full and equal members of our countries.

So humility I think is needed. And the second thing we need is to uphold the distinction between our faith and our governments. Between church and between state. The United States is one of the most religious countries in the world—far more religious than most Western developed countries. And one of the reasons is that our founders wisely embraced the separation of church and state. Our government does not sponsor a religion, nor does it pressure anyone to practice a particular faith, or any faith at all. And the result is a culture where people of all backgrounds and beliefs can freely and proudly worship, without fear, or coercion—so that when your listen to Darrell talk about his faith journey, you know it's real. You know he's not saying it because it helps him advance, or because somebody told him to. It's from the heart.

That's not the case in theocracies that restrict people's choice of faith. It's not the case in authoritarian governments that elevate an individual leader or a political party above the people, or in some cases, above the concept of God Himself. So the freedom of religion is a value we will continue to protect here at home and stand up for around the world, and is one that we guard vigilantly here in the United States.

Last year, we joined together to pray for the release of Christian missionary Kenneth Bae, held in North Korea for two years. And today, we give thanks that Kenneth is finally back where he belongs—home with his family. [Applause]

Last year we prayed together for Pastor Saeed Abedini, detained in Iran since 2012. And I was recently in Boise, Idaho, and had the opportunity to meet with Pastor Abedini's beautiful wife and wonderful children and to convey to them that our country has not forgotten brother Saeed and that we're doing everything that we can to bring him home. [Applause] And then, I received an extraordinary letter from Pastor Abedini. And in it, he describes his captivity, and expressed his gratitude for my visit with his family, and thanked us all for standing in solidarity with him during his captivity.

And Pastor Abedini wrote, ''Nothing is more valuable to the Body of Christ than to see how the Lord is in control, and moves ahead of countries and leadership through united prayer.'' And he closed his letter by describing himself as ''prisoner for Christ, who is proud to be part of this great nation, the United States of America that cares for religious freedom around the world.'' [Applause]

We're going to keep up this work—for Pastor Abedini and all those around the world who are unjustly held or persecuted because of their faith. And we're grateful to our new Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Rabbi David Saperstein—who has hit the ground running, and is heading to Iraq in a few days to help religious communities there address some of those challenges. Where's David? I know he's here somewhere. Thank you David for the great work you're doing. [Applause]

Humility; a suspicion of government getting between us and our faith or trying to dictate our faiths, or elevate one faith over another. And, finally, let's remember that if there is one law that we can all be most certain of that seems to bind people of all faiths and people who are still finding their way towards faith but have a sense of ethics and morality in them—that one law, that Golden Rule that we should treat one another as we wish to be treated. The Torah says ''Love thy neighbor as yourself.'' In Islam, there is a Hadith that states: ''None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.'' The Holy Bible tells us to ''put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.'' Put on love.

Whatever our beliefs, whatever our traditions, we must seek to be instruments of peace, and bringing light where there is darkness, and sowing love where there is hatred. And this is the loving message of His Holiness Pope Francis. And like so many people around the world, I've been touched by his call to relieve suffering, and to show justice and mercy and compassion to the most vulnerable; to walk with the Lord and ask ''Who am I to judge?'' He challenges us to press on in what he calls our ''march of living hope.'' And like millions of Americans, I am very much looking forward to welcoming Pope Francis to the United States later this year. [Applause.]

His Holiness expresses that basic law: Treat thy neighbor as thyself. The Dalai Lama—anybody who's had an opportunity to be with him senses that same spirit. Kent Brantly expresses that same spirit. Kent was with Samaritan's Purse, treating Ebola patients in Liberia, when he contracted the virus himself. And with world-class medical care and a deep reliance on faith—with God's help, Kent survived. [Applause.]

And then by donating his plasma, he helped others survive as well. And he continues to advocate for a global response in West Africa, reminding us that ''our efforts need to be on loving the people there.'' And I could not have been prouder to welcome Kent and his wonderful wife Amber to the Oval Office. We are blessed to have him here today—because he reminds us of what it means to really ''love thy neighbor as thyself.'' Not just words, but deeds.

Each of us has a role in fulfilling our common, greater purpose—not merely to seek high position, but to plumb greater depth so that we may find the strength to love more fully. And this is perhaps our greatest challenge—to see our own reflection in each other; to be our brother's keepers and sister's keepers, and to keep faith with one another. As children of God, let's make that our work, together.

As children of God, let's work to end injustice—injustice of poverty and hunger. No one should ever suffer from such want amid such plenty. As children of God, let's work to eliminate the scourge of homelessness, because as Sister Mary says, ''None of us are home until all of us are home.'' None of us are home until all of us are home.

As children of God, let's stand up for the dignity and value of every woman, and man, and child, because we are all equal in His eyes, and work to end the scourge and the sin of modern-day slavery and human trafficking, and ''set the oppressed free.'' [Applause]

If we are properly humble, if we drop to our knees on occasion, we will acknowledge that we never fully know God's purpose. We can never fully fathom His amazing grace. ''We see through a glass, darkly''—grappling with the expanse of His awesome love. But even with our limits, we can heed that which is required: To do justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

I pray that we will. And as we journey together on this ''march of living hope,'' I pray that, in His name, we will run and not be weary, and walk and not be faint, and we will heed those words and ''put on love.''

May the Lord bless you and keep you, and may He bless this precious country that we love.

Thank you all very much. [Applause]

Senator CASEY: Mr. President, thank you for your message, and we're honored by your presence here today. We close our program with one song and one prayer. Our last song this morning will be sung by a remarkable young man, and those words don't do justice to who this person is. A young man from Tennessee named Quintavious Johnson. If you're a fan of the television show, America's Got Talent, you might recognize him as one of last year's finalists. But today, singing at the National Prayer Breakfast in front of more than 3,500 at the age of 13. Just imagine that, that's going to be hard to top. And now to sing the Lord's Prayer, please welcome Quintavious Johnson. [Applause]

Quintavious Johnson [Singing]

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
And give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our debt, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
And the glory, forever.
Amen.

[Applause]

Senator CASEY: Wow! Quintavious, thank you for your great performance, we're grateful you're with us this morning. And finally this morning, our last prayer at this breakfast will be offered by an extraordinary public servant who also happens to be a minister. He's a former Member of Congress, Ambassador to the United Nations, Mayor of Atlanta, and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, a well-known civil rights leader and friend of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Our next speaker was instrumental in the civil rights campaigns in Selma, and in Birmingham that ultimately led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. [Applause] But of all of his many titles and accomplishments, he's most proud of his role as husband, father, and grandfather. Ladies and gentlemen, the Honorable Andrew Young. [Applause]

The Honorable ANDREW J. YOUNG: This morning I woke up to the hearings of the Senate committee on your new appointment as Secretary of Defense. And as they went around talking about all of the dangers and problems that he must confront, and that you must face every day, I realized that's why we need prayer. And I wondered, has the world ever been in this bad of shape? And I remember when I was about the age of Quintavious, even a little earlier, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and Germans were sinking ships, and America was far weaker then. We still had the same conflicts in Congress. We still had the same differences racially, and emotionally, and religiously, but somehow we pulled together and we heard the President say, ''The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.'' And then a little while later, in fact quite a while later, the people with whom we had gone to war became our best friends and our trading partners. And this country of ours helped unite the world, and in thanks for that, President Eisenhower asked that we come together and form this prayer breakfast, to thank God—for only the spirit of Jesus can forgive as we forgave, can reconcile enemies to each other, and that same Jesus that walked with President Eisenhower and all the presidents since, therefore, with you Mr. President. And when

I look at these young people from Mississippi, Senator, we have overcome so much. [Applause] And we thank you, and we thank all of you, and we thank God. May we pray:

Be with us dear Father, as we take on the challenges of life, not just as government but as business, as private sector and nonprofit sector, as religious leaders, as community leaders, as volunteers, as fathers and mothers, as brothers and sisters, as mothers and sons, and fathers and daughters, bind us together, heal our wounds, calm our spirits and make us always mindful that you came into the world to say you would make all things new, but that you would be with us always. So as we go through many dangers, toils, and snares by your amazing grace, make us always mindful that your presence is in the midst of us. That each of us, because of you, know that we too are your children and that our Father loves us, forgives us, saves us by the mercy that we must share with each other and with the world in which we live. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen. [Applause]

Senator WICKER: Thank you, Ambassador Young. And as we conclude this, the 63rd Annual National Prayer Breakfast—depart with these words of God from the Book of Numbers: ''The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.'' Amen.

RECOGNIZING THE FIFTH AMERICAN PRISONER OF WAR FRIENDSHIP DELEGATION TO JAPAN

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I wish to honor veterans from America's ''greatest generation'' who were held captive as prisoners of war, POWs, by Japan during World War II and to recognize seven veterans—including three from California—who recently participated in a historic trip to Japan to promote reconciliation and remembrance.

At the invitation of the Japanese Government, the veterans were joined by their family members to become the 5th delegation of American POWs to visit Japan as part of the official Japanese-American POW Friendship Program that began in 2010.

These brave men fought in the historic first battles of World War II and endured years of hardship as POWs. This year, as we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, I want to recognize them and honor their service and sacrifice.

Anthony Costa, 95, from Concord, CA, was a private first class in the famed 4th Marine Regiment, also known as the China Marines, which arrived in the Philippines days before the Japanese invasion. He fought to defend the island of Corregidor in the Philippines from December 1941 to May 1942 before he was captured by the Japanese. As a POW, Private Costa was force-marched through Manila and taken to the Cabanatuan prison camp, where thousands of POWs died from starvation, dehydration and abuse. He was then moved to Japan to work as a slave dockworker in the freight yards in and around Osaka before being liberated in September 1945. He was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart.

William Sanchez, 96, from Monterey Park, CA, was an Army sergeant with the 59th Coast Artillery assigned to the island of Corregidor in the Philippines where he helped defend the harbor against the Japanese invasion. In May 1942, Sergeant Sanchez and the rest of his division were captured and paraded through the streets of Manila to Bilibid Prison. He was later transported to Japan in the hold of a Japanese hell ship, where he endured a 33-day oceanic journey plagued by dysentery, malaria and malnutrition before reaching Camp Omori. At the POW camp, he was forced to work as a slave laborer and dockworker at the railway yards in Tokyo prior to his liberation in August 1945.

Jack Schwartz, 100, from Hanford, CA, was a Navy lieutenant junior grade serving on Guam when the Japanese Navy attacked the island on December 8, 1941. When Guam fell to the Japanese, Lieutenant Schwartz was taken to a POW camp in Japan where he was repeatedly beaten, starved and provided insufficient clothing to endure the harsh winters. He was sent to several POW camps before being moved to Camp Rokuroshi, which was hidden in the Japanese Alps. After being liberated on September 8, 1945, he remained in the Navy and retired after a distinguished career in 1962.

My constituents were joined on their trip by Daniel Crowley, 92, of Connecticut, an Army Air Corps infantryman who participated in the defense of Bataan and Corregidor; Oral Nichols, 93, of New Mexico, who served as a civilian medic in the historic defense of Wake Island; Warren Jorgenson, 93, of Nebraska, a marine who defended Corregidor; and Darrell Stark, 91, of Connecticut, who served as an Army infantryman on the Bataan Peninsula.

This trip was part of a reconciliation process that, while undoubtedly painful, is critical to help provide closure to POWs and their families and continue building stronger relations between the U.S. and Japan. It is important that this reconciliation program continue so that this history is remembered and the families can continue to heal.

REMEMBERING PETTY OFFICER SECOND CLASS HEIDI FRIEDMAN

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, today I have the solemn duty of memorializing U.S. Navy PO2 Heidi Jo Friedman, a New Hampshire native who was tragically killed on April 12 at the age of 33. Petty Officer Friedman was serving aboard the aircraft carrier USS *George H. W. Bush* as an engineman, having transferred from Navy Operation Support Center Manchester in January. She entered the Navy in 2002, and previously served on the guided-missile destroyer USS *Ross* and in the Navy Reserve with Amphibious Construction Battalion Two Detachment 101.

Heidi was born on June 28, 1981 to her father Robert, a retired Navy chief petty officer, and her mother Shari Murray. She graduated from Ledyard High School, in Ledyard, CT, and enjoyed volunteering as a mentor to children and with the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Foundation. Heidi was also a lifetime Girl Scout with a passion for rugby and traveling. To those who knew her, Heidi was a loving and caring friend—someone who touched people in a positive way. I know there are many who feel her absence deeply.

Petty Officer Friedman is survived by her mother Shari L. Murray, her father and stepmother Robert B. and Laurie E. Friedman, her grandmother Arlene Canin, her brother Michael L. and wife Erin Friedman, three stepsisters: Jaime and wife Rochelle, Kara and Maria and fiancée Chris; three stepbrothers, Cito and fiancée Lyne, Quique and wife Amanda and Nolan; two nephews, Alexander and Ashton; and many aunts, uncles and cousins.

On behalf of the people of New Hampshire, I ask my colleagues and all Americans to join me in honoring the life and service of PO2 Heidi Jo Friedman.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING SALLY WAGNER

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, too often we forget or take for granted just how important teachers are. I try not to do that because I married one. But the positive impact teachers have on our youth and on society is incalculable. Today, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge one outstanding teacher who is retiring after a distinguished 40-year career—the last 34 years of which have been spent at Eleanor Roosevelt High School, ERHS, in Greenbelt, MD—Ms. Sally S. Wagner. Ms. Wagner is the chair of the Instrumental Music Department at ERHS. In 2005, a Washington Post article took note of Ms. Wagner's extraordinary achievements as an educator noting, ''The school [ERHS] has several legendary teachers, including band director Sally Wagner . . . and a 750-student musical juggernaut with so many ensembles and bands that one can barely keep count.''

For the past several years, we have been properly involved in an effort to improve so-called STEM education in this country. That acronym stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Bolstering STEM education is important for economic competitiveness, national security, and keeping America at the forefront of the technological changes that will make life better for all of humanity. But too many schools, grappling with budget cuts, have scaled back or even eliminated their arts and music curricula. Fortunately, there is burgeoning awareness of the importance of these courses, too. And now people are talking about STEAM, where the ''A''

stands for arts and music. All of these subjects are interrelated and complementary. After all, it was Albert Einstein who said, ''The greatest scientists are artists as well'' and who would play the violin or piano for intuition or inspiration when he became ''stuck'' on one of his formulas or equations.

Fortunately for the students at ERHS, which is an outstanding science and technology school, by the way, the music program has always been robust, too, and Ms. Wagner has been in charge. Her career in music began when she was a child, with piano lessons. In the sixth grade, she started learning how to play the trombone. She ultimately earned her degrees from Michigan State University and the University of Delaware. Teaching and bands are her passion. In 2001, Ms. Wagner was cited in School Band and Orchestra Magazine as one of ''50 Directors Who Make a Difference'' and she received the Maryland Music Educators Association Outstanding Music Teacher Award. In 2006, Ms. Wagner received the National Honor Society Outstanding Teacher Award and the Claes Nobel Educator of Distinction Award. Claes Nobel—the grand-nephew of Alfred Nobel—established the National Society of High School Scholars, which made the award.

Ms. Wagner is a Music Educators National Conference, MENC—now known as the National Association for Music Education, or NAfME, Nationally Registered Music Educator. She received the Prince George's County Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Educator Award, Excellence in Teaching Awards from Prince George's County Public Schools, the County Council, the Maryland House of Delegates and the Governor of Maryland, and was recognized in 1994 by the University of Maryland Center for Teaching Excellence.

Ms. Wagner is a member of MENC/NAfME, the Women Band Directors International, the Maryland Music Educators Association, and the Maryland Band Directors Association. She is active as an adjudicator, clinician, and guest conductor, and she writes articles for The Woman Conductor and BandWorld Magazine.

These are numerous accolades and tremendous accomplishments, to be sure. But what is most important is the love that Ms. Wagner has for her students—at least one of whom is a second generation ERHS band musician—and the love and respect and admiration they have for her in return. She built the ERHS instrumental music program with incomparable care for every one of her students. Her love of music, teaching, and performing is evident in each and every interaction she has with her students, their parents, colleagues, and others in the community. She has touched and inspired thousands of students over her career with her talent, hard work, joy, dedication, sense of humor, intellect, leadership, kindness, and—above all—love. She has taught her students about responsibility, dedication, teamwork, and the pursuit of excellence. Of course, these lessons aren't just about music; they are important lessons about life.

Just a couple of comments posted by students on the ERHS Facebook page tell the story. One student wrote, ''She is totally awesome. I swear, she is the most amazing teacher ever. She makes my day, every day. I'm just crossing my fingers and praying that she won't retire before I graduate!'' Another student wrote, ''Ms. Wagner inspired me to do my absolute best in music and helped me discover how important music is in my life. She is my hero.'' Another wrote, ''Instrument rentals: $25. Uniform fee: $20. Being in her class: priceless.'' Another student wrote, ''She always encouraged me to excel. She pushed me and believed in me. I learned more from her than anyone. She was the greatest teacher! Her love for music shines through.'' Finally, from an alumnus, ''I had Ms. Wagner way back in 1985—she was great back then, and it is great to see that she is still well-loved.''

In 2004, the ERHS band community of students, parents, and alumni commissioned the score ''Under the Magical Wing'' as a tribute to Ms. Wagner in appreciation and recognition of her dedication to the ERHS music program. Now the ERHS community has established the ''Sally Wagner Performing Arts Space,'' a new black box theatre at ERHS.

U2's Bono has said, ''Music can change the world because it can change people.'' If that is true, and I believe it is, think of the world-changing impact Ms. Wagner has had over the course of her career. Think of the joy she has brought to so many people. I would ask my colleagues here in the Senate to join me in thanking Ms. Sally Wagner for her extraordinary contributions and congratulate her on her retirement. Strike up the band.●

REMEMBERING SANDRA WISECAVER

● Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, today I honor the life and legacy of Sandra Wisecaver, owner and operator of the Buhl Herald in Buhl, ID. Sandra leaves an enduring legacy of dedication to her community and deep personal strength.

Sandra is remembered as a remarkable journalist, who led the Buhl Herald as owner and operator since 2005 after working at the newspaper for many years. She started working at the paper as a senior at Buhl High School and worked for the paper while attending the College of Southern Idaho. After working in other fields, she became the Castleford correspondent for the paper in 1987, and returned to the Herald in 1992. She worked as reporter and editor before purchasing the newspaper 10 years ago. Sandra's commitment to providing an outlet for stories about the achievements of area youth and a sound chronicle of community events will not be forgotten. She worked hard to ensure that the stories that mattered to her community reached her readership.

A native of Buhl, Sandra's roots were firmly planted in the community she loved. She was born on August 30, 1949, to Jess and Vina Wilson of Buhl. In 1967, she graduated from Buhl High School and married Joe Wisecaver in 1969. In addition to her work at the newspaper, she also worked in Green Giant's payroll department, worked at the Corner Merc in Castleford, and Sandra and Joe maintained the contract for the mail delivery to Roseworth. She was a community leader also, dedicating considerable time as a 4–H leader, Cub Scout den mother, and baseball and softball cheer mom and driver.

Sandra's personal strength cannot be overstated. Beyond her role at the newspaper and in the community, Sandra was an example of fortitude. She overcame a stroke and persevered through stage IV kidney cancer to continue to publish the newspaper that had a central role in Buhl for more than a century. Her grit and determination was inspiring. She is an exceptional example of staying power and commitment to her community.

I extend my condolences to her husband Joe; her children, Angela and Joe Jr.; their families, including her three grandchildren; her many friends and the Buhl community. Sandra Wisecaver was an amazing woman who leaves behind a legacy of thoughtful and determined leadership.●

RECOGNIZING TANNER ARCHULETA, JACOB JAVORSKY, AND AMANDA BUXTON

● Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I wish to recognize three outstanding Montana students who exemplified true bravery and heroism last week.

Tanner Archuleta and Jacob Javorsky from Flathead High School in Kalispell, MT, rushed to help when they saw smoke billowing from a house down the street from school. Tanner raced into the house and awoke Ryan Murray, who escaped the burning house safely with his dog. Separately, Amanda Buxton took action on her way to school and alerted authorities to the fire, providing fire crews much needed timely information.

Tanner, Jacob and Amanda deserve much recognition for their ability to act quickly and selflessly in an emergency. Their quick thinking saved the life of a fellow Montanan. They are admirable young Montanans and deserve endless thanks.●

MILITARY ACADEMY APPOINTMENTS

● Mr. LEE. Mr. President, each year members of Congress are authorized, under title 10 of the U.S. Code, to nominate a number of young men and women from their district or State to

attend the U.S. Air Force Academy, the U.S. Military Academy, and the U.S. Naval Academy. But receiving a congressional nomination is no guarantee of acceptance. To be admitted, each applicant must meet—on his or her own merits—the academies' rigorous standards.

I am proud to announce the names of 20 outstanding Utahns who have met these standards and who will attend one of the academies in the summer of 2015. This is more than twice as many accepted applicants than I have ever seen in my 5 years in the Senate.

Each of these 20 students is of sound mind and body. This will serve them well in Colorado Springs, West Point, and Annapolis. But to succeed, they will need more than this.

The journey these young men and women are about to begin requires more than intellectual and physical fitness. It also demands strong moral character—leadership, courage, honesty, prudence, and self-discipline. And it calls for a commitment to service and a love of country.

Today, I would like to recognize and congratulate each of these impressive students, all of whom embody, in their own unique way, the standards of excellence on which America's service academies are built.

Cole Bennett Biedermann will be attending the U.S. Air Force Academy. Cole will be graduating from Skyline High School, where he was a member of the National Honor Society, captain of the track team, and president of the physics club. Dedicated to helping those around him and serving his community, Cole tutored his high school classmates and volunteered at the Huntsman Cancer Institute.

Jonsen Koy Crandall will be returning to the U.S. Air Force Academy after serving for two years in Taichung, Taiwan on a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A graduate of South Summit High School, where he was a two-time State champion wrestler, Jonsen is currently attending Dixie State University, where he served as an outstanding intern in my St. George office.

Thomas Abram Davenport will be attending the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Thomas will be coming to West Point from Brigham Young University-Hawaii, where he participated in the ROTC. Originally from Draper, UT, Thomas earned his Eagle Scout, attended Boys State, was a member of the National Honor Society, and toured with the service, singing, and performing group Clayton Productions.

McKenna Elise Fox will be returning to the U.S. Air Force Academy, where she played on the women's soccer team, after serving in the Guayaquil North Mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. McKenna graduated from Lone Peak High School, where she was recognized as an outstanding student and served as captain of the soccer team.

Stephen William Kelly, from Juan Diego Catholic High School, will be attending the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Excelling in music, athletics, and academics, Stephen played in the drum line and steel band, was an award-winning pitcher for the baseball team, and never missed an honor role while in high school. Stephen also participated in the FIRST Robotics Competition and served as a volunteer for the Knights of Columbus.

Paul Michael Lee will be attending the U.S. Air Force Academy. A graduate of Northridge High School, and currently enrolled in Northwestern Preparatory School, Paul participated in the Air Force JROTC and was a member of the National Honor Society. Having spent a portion of his childhood with his family on the Yongsan Garrison Army Base in South Korea, Paul would later become involved in Model United Nations. He is also an accomplished table tennis player.

Brandon Arthur Lloyd will be returning to the U.S. Air Force Academy after serving for 2 years in Berlin, Germany on a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A graduate from Highland High School and the Air Force Academy Prep School, Brandon earned his Eagle Scout, attended Boys State, and was named Wrestler of the Year while serving as team captain.

Jace Aukela Miller, from American Fork High School, will be attending the U.S. Air Force Academy. A model student athlete, Jace was a member of the National Honor Society and captain, as well as most valuable player of the lacrosse team. In addition to working as a lifeguard at the American Fork Recreation Center, Jace volunteered his time teaching outdoor adventure skills to at-risk youth.

Tanner Scott Munson will be attending the U.S. Naval Academy. Tanner will be graduating from Lehi High School, where he was a member of the National Honor Society and captain of the soccer team. An exemplar of community service and civic participation, Tanner served as a member of the Lehi City Youth Council, an intern with Lehi Fire and Rescue, and a volunteer with special-needs children.

Julia ''Genna'' Genevieve Murray will be attending the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. A Utah State champion sprinter and captain of the track and field team, Genna will be graduating from Springville High School. In addition to serving as a volunteer with at-risk youth, Genna is an outstanding student and a member of the National Honor Society.

Taylor Mize Porges, from Park City High School, will be attending the U.S. Naval Academy. Excelling in academics and athletics, Taylor was a member of the National Honor Society, captain of the soccer team, and president of Park City Climbing Club. In addition to serving as a volunteer with Youthlinc in South America, he participated in the Park City Center for Advanced Professional Studies, where he helped create a 3–D model of the Heber Airport for flight simulation programs.

Joshua Dalton Proulx will be attending the U.S. Air Force Academy. A graduate of Bonneville High School, Joshua is currently attending Greystone Preparatory School at Schreiner University. In addition to being an Eagle Scout, Joshua was a member of the National Honor Society and captain of the cross country and track and field teams. He also served as president of the Parent Teacher Student Association and participated in the Civil Air Patrol.

Mormon Joseph Ephraim Redd will be returning to the U.S. Air Force Academy after spending the past 2 years serving in the Japan Fukuoka mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Originally from Farmington, UT, Mormon is the seventh brother in his family to serve in the Armed Forces. He graduated from Viewmont High School, where he was captain of the wrestling team and an honor student. He has also volunteered with the Youthlinc humanitarian programs.

Corben David Ruf, from North Summit High School, will be attending the U.S. Air Force Academy. At North Summit, Corben distinguished himself in student government, as student body president; in academics, as a General Sterling Scholar and member of the National Honor Society; and in athletics, as captain of the football and wrestling teams. He also attended the Utah National Guard Freedom and Leadership Academy and won best supporting actor in the Utah Festival Opera.

Matthew Walker Schvaneveldt will be attending the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Currently attending the Northern Utah Academy for Math, Engineering and Science, as well as Weber State University, Matthew is an Eagle Scout, attended Boys State, and was captain of the wrestling team. He also received the volunteer of the year award from McKay-Dee Hospital, and served as president of his school's National Honor Society.

Parker Dawson Sharp, a graduate of both Wasatch High School and Northwestern Preparatory School, will be attending the U.S. Naval Academy. In addition to earning his Eagle Scout, Parker has excelled in music, as an accomplished cellist, pianist, and vocalist. He also participated in Model United Nations, and is a Krav Maga enthusiast. Parker is currently attending the University of Utah.

Dean Quentin Smith, from Timpanogos High School, will be attending the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. As an Eagle Scout, captain of the wrestling and baseball teams, and president of the Chinese Club, Dean has been a leader in all of his pursuits. He was also a member of the National Honor Society, and he volunteered with special-needs children.

Dietrich Gregory Streuber will be attending the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Dietrich will be graduating from Morgan High School, where he was a member of the debate team and the National Honor Society, as well as captain of the football team. Dietrich also earned his Eagle Scout, attended Boys State, and participated in the Weber-Morgan Governing Youth Council.

Christopher Mark Vincent, from Skyline High School, will be attending the U.S. Naval Academy. A recipient of the Kiwanis Hope of American Leadership Award, Christopher is an Eagle Scout and captain of the Skyline High School debate team. He also attended Boys State and the Utah National Guard Freedom and Leadership Academy.

Jacob Henry Witt, currently a lance corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps, will be attending the U.S. Naval Academy. A graduate of Wasatch High School, Jacob was the captain of the tennis team and a member of the National Honor Society. He was a member of the Future Business Leaders of America, FBLA, State championship team, and he received first place in the Marine Corps essay contest for his writing on the U.S. Constitution and The Federalist Papers.

It has been an honor and an inspiration to meet and to nominate each of these young men and women. Doing so has given me an unshakeable confidence in the future of this great Nation and the future of our armed services.

But to these 20 students, and to all their future classmates from around the country, do not forget: this is but the beginning of your journey.

You would not have arrived at this point were it not for your hard work and sacrifice. But what matters most now is not your accomplishments of the past, but what you have yet to achieve in the future.●

RECOGNIZING THE WASHINGTON STATE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS

● Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, today I express my deep gratitude and appreciation for the National Association of Letter Carriers, especially its members in my home State of Washington.

On Saturday, May 9, letter carriers throughout Washington State will join their colleagues from around the country for their Stamp Out Hunger food drive, an annual event that has provided needed meals to so many. In more than 10,000 cities and towns across our country, letter carriers use our mail delivery network to collect donated food.

The food drive, now in its 23rd year, is a shining example of their commitment to our communities. In addition to the excellent service they provide as part of their daily work, these dedicated men and women will be picking up donated food on a Saturday to deliver to food banks and pantries in their communities. In 2010, the food drive reached an amazing milestone as it surpassed the 1-billion-pound mark for collections.

I thank the men and women of the National Association of Letter Carriers for their hard work and commitment to their communities, and I wish them the best with this year's Stamp Out Hunger food drive.●

RECOGNIZING JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

● Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate John Jay College of Criminal Justice on the occasion of their 50th anniversary.

Located in the cultural heart of New York City, John Jay College is one of the Nation's leading liberal arts institutions of higher education with a mission of ''educating for justice.'' For 50 years, John Jay College has produced leaders, scholars, and heroes in policing, including forensic science, law, fire and emergency management, social work, teaching, private security, forensic psychology, and corrections. As an international leader in educating for justice, John Jay offers a rich liberal arts and professional studies curriculum to upwards of 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students from more than 135 nations, including over 47 percent first-generation students and more than 500 veterans. John Jay College is ranked No. 3 in the Nation as a ''Best for Vet'' institution by Military Times in their 2015 national college rankings of 600 universities and colleges.

In the 1960s, a small and dedicated group of academic visionaries came together to develop a plan for a new college named the College of Police Science within the City University of New York. Within a year, the college was renamed the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to reflect broader aspirations and achievements in criminal justice, leadership, and public service. John Jay was the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court and served as Governor of our great State of New York. The college opened in 1965 with 1,000 students and one major.

The challenges and hard work envisioned when John Jay College was created continue today. John Jay College is a critical part of New York. The spirit of John Jay College of Criminal Justice can be found in its students, Pulitzer Prize-winning faculty, and enthusiastic administrators who form a, civic-minded community of motivated and intellectually curious individuals committed to public service and global citizenship.

For example, earlier this year, the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations, NECO, established a scholarship at John Jay College in memory of New York City Police Department Detectives Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu, who lost their lives in December 2014 while serving the citizens of New York. The scholarship was announced on March 11 during the college's NYPD alumni reception held in celebration of the longstanding partnership and collaboration with the NYPD. Of course, September 11, 2001 had a profound impact on the campus and served as a catalyst to honor the 67 students, faculty, and alumni who lost their lives that day. John Jay established a variety of initiatives, programs, research centers, scholarships, including the creation of the Center on Terrorism to study global terrorism and the Christian Regenhard Center for Emergency Response Studies, named after a probationary firefighter killed at the World Trade Center. As one of the leading institutions in the country in the field of criminal justice and public safety, John Jay College is one of the few institutions to offer M.A. students a certificate in the critical study of terrorism.

John Jay College's commitment to diversity is shown by the fact that it has the highest Hispanic enrollment of any 4-year college in the Northeastern United States, and it has ranked No. 1 in the Nation in awarding bachelor's degree in protective services, No. 3 in psychology degrees, and No. 7 in public administration. John Jay's undergraduate, graduate and doctoral forensic degree programs are top ranking. The College's Master of Public Administration programs recently received the Diversity and Social Equity Awards by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration. The nationally recognized Program for Research Initiatives in Science and Math, PRISM, at John Jay College engages underrepresented students in careers in science and math by providing an opportunity for them to participate in faculty-mentored scientific research in areas like molecular biology, toxicology, criminalistics and computer science, and partake in professional research conferences while completing their degree. Since its inception, graduation numbers from the College's science majors have tripled, and the number of students, and especially underrepresented minority students, moving on to doctoral and medical degrees has grown five-fold.

John Jay's faculty personify excellence—they include Pulitzer Prize winners, Presidential scholars, recipients of prestigious book awards, presidents of leading professional organizations, and editors of prominent scholarly journals. They have been recognized by their peers and even by the White House for their dedication to teaching, research, and mentoring. The college's students regularly win prestigious scholarships, including the Marshal Scholarship, internships, including the White House Internship, and fellowships, including Fulbright, JK Watson and the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. They are also accepted to high-profile graduate and professional schools. Their alumni number more than 54,000, many

of whom hold leadership roles in public sector agencies, including the United States Marshals Service, the FBI, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the National Parks Service, the State Department, Peace Corps, the United Nations, and private companies in the United States and worldwide.

Affordability is an essential component of the college's core mission. At a time when over 37 million Americans are saddled with over $1 trillion in student debt, John Jay College was recently named one of the top 10 colleges where students graduate with the least debt. Only 20 percent of John Jay students were compelled to borrow money to finance their college education, less than one-third of the national average. And the vast majority of John Jay students graduate debt-free—enabling them to become successful in service for others without having to spend years paying off their student loans. In fact John Jay College was recently ranked No. 4 in the ''Best Bang for the Buck'' in the Northeast rankings in Washington Monthly's College guide.

John Jay develops fierce advocates for justice—each committed every day to building a better democracy. I am proud to represent John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the values that it stands for and works for every day. Congratulations to John Jay College on this very important day and its 50-year record of fighting for justice.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:43 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 172. An act to designate the United States courthouse located at 501 East Court Street in Jackson, Mississippi, as the ''R. Jess Brown United States Courthouse''.

H.R. 373. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Agriculture to expedite access to certain Federal land under the administrative jurisdiction of each Secretary for good Samaritan search-and-recovery missions, and for other purposes.

H.R. 984. An act to amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Chief Standing Bear National Historic Trail, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1075. An act to designate the United States Customs and Border Protection Port of Entry located at First Street and Pan American Avenue in Douglas, Arizona, as the ''Raul Hector Castro Port of Entry''.

H.R. 1324. An act to adjust the boundary of the Arapaho National Forest, Colorado, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1690. An act to designate the United States courthouse located at 700 Grant Street in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as the ''Joseph F. Weis Jr. United States Courthouse''.

The message also announced that pursuant to 44 U.S.C. 2702 and the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Speaker appoints the following individual on the part of the House of Representatives to the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress: Mr. Jeffrey W. Thomas of Columbus, Ohio.

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 172. An act to designate the United States courthouse located at 501 East Court Street in Jackson, Mississippi, as the ''R. Jess Brown United States Courthouse''; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

H.R. 373. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Agriculture to expedite access to certain Federal land under the administrative jurisdiction of each Secretary for good Samaritan search-and-recovery missions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 984. An act to amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Chief Standing Bear National Historic Trail, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 1075. An act to designate the United States Customs and Border Protection Port of Entry located at First Street and Pan American Avenue in Douglas, Arizona, as the ''Raul Hector Castro Port of Entry''; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

H.R. 1324. An act to adjust the boundary of the Arapaho National Forest, Colorado, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 1690. An act to designate the United States courthouse located at 700 Grant Street in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as the ''Joseph F. Weis Jr. United States Courthouse''; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

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–1384. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safludenacil; Pesticide Tolerances'' (FRL No. 9923–57) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–1385. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Bicyclopyrone; Pesticide Tolerances'' (FRL No. 9926–66) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–1386. A communication from the Congressional Review Coordinator , Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Importation of Apples From China'' ((RIN0579–AD89) (Docket No. APHIS–2014–0003)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–1387. A communication from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Importation of Papayas From Peru'' ((RIN0579–AD68) (Docket No. APHIS–2012–0014)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–1388. A communication from the Assistant Director, Executive and Political Personnel, Department of Defense, transmitting, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary of the Air Force, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–1389. A communication from the Assistant Director, Senior Executive Management Office, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Department of the Navy, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–1390. A communication from the Assistant Director, Senior Executive Management Office, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), Department of Defense, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–1391. A communication from the Assistant Director, Senior Executive Management Office, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), Department of Defense, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–1392. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''2015 Report to Congress on Sustainable Ranges''; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–1393. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Suspension of Community Eligibility'' ((44 CFR Part 64) (Docket No. FEMA–2015–0001)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1394. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Suspension of Community Eligibility'' ((44 CFR Part 64) (Docket No. FEMA–2015–0001)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1395. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12978 of October 21, 1995, with respect to significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1396. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to the situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo that was declared in Executive Order 13413 of October 27, 2006; to

the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1397. A communication from the Secretary of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the export to the People's Republic of China of items not detrimental to the U.S. space launch industry; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1398. A communication from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Special Regulations, Areas of the National Park System, Bryce Canyon National Park, Bicycling'' (RIN1024–AE23) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 27, 2015; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–1399. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country (OSS–2015–0468); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1400. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country (OSS–2015–0467); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1401. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country (OSS–2015–0466); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1402. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country (OSS–2015–0465); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1403. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country (OSS–2015–0470); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1404. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country (OSS–2015–0469); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1405. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a strategy for Support for Russia Democracy and Civil Society Organizations; a strategy for Assistance to Civil Society in Ukraine; and a strategy for Anticipated Defense Articles, Defense Services, and Training to Ukraine (OSS–2015–0471); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1406. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to sections 36(c) and 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 14–129); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1407. A communication from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Case-Zablocki Act, 1 U.S.C. 112b, as amended, the report of the texts and background statements of international agreements, other than treaties (List 2015–0032—2015–0035); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1408. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the activities of the Millennium Challenge Corporation during fiscal year 2014; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–1409. A communication from the Acting Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska: Sablefish Managed Under the Individual Fishing Quota Program'' (RIN0648–XD818) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1410. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Pacific Halibut Fisheries; Catch Sharing Plan'' (RIN0648–BE69) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1411. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''International Fisheries; Western and Central Pacific Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species; Fishing Restrictions Regarding the Oceanic Whitetip Shark, the Whale Shark, and the Silky Shark'' (RIN0648–BD44) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1412. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries Off West Coast States; Highly Migratory Fisheries; California Swordfish Drift Gillnet Fishery; Vessel Monitoring System and Pre-Trip Notification Requirements'' (RIN0648–BE25) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1413. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization Program'' (RIN0648–BA61) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1414. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Provisions Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Black Sea Bass Fishery; Framework Adjustment 8'' (RIN0648–BE60) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1415. A communication from the Acting Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2015 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for South Atlantic Vermilion Snapper'' (RIN0648–XD734) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1416. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Snapper-Grouper Fishery Off the Southern Atlantic States; Amendment 32'' (RIN0648–BE20) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1417. A communication from the Acting Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Northern Rockfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area'' (RIN0648–XD844) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1418. A communication from the Acting Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder Fishery; Quota Transfer'' (RIN0648–XD874) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1419. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Xterra Swim, Myrtle Beach, SC'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0019)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1420. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Sabine River, Orange, TX'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0236)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1421. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Eastern Branch Elizabeth River; Norfolk, VA'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0202)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1422. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Barge-based Fireworks, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0213)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1423. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Naval Helicopter Association (NHA) Red Bull Helicopter Demonstration;

San Diego Bay, San Diego, CA'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0137)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1424. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum Fireworks Display; Lake Erie, Cleveland, OH'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0186)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1425. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Marina del Rey Fireworks Show, Santa Monica Bay; Marina del Rey, California'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0155)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1426. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Sellwood Bridge Construction, Willamette River, Portland, OR'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0187)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1427. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Naval Helicopter Association (NHA) Red Bull Helicopter Demonstration; San Diego Bay, San Diego, CA'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0137)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1428. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Vessel Fire and Escort, Port of New York, NJ, NY'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0189)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1429. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Delaware River; Marcus Hook, PA'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0129)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1430. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Safety Zone; Tesoro Terminal Protest: Port of Long Beach Harbor; Pacific Ocean, California'' ((RIN1625–AA00) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0163)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1431. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Mantua Creek, Paulsboro, NJ'' ((RIN1625–AA09) (Docket No. USCG–2014–0807)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1432. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Coquille River, Bandon, OR'' ((RIN1625–AA09) (Docket No. USCG–2014–0213)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1433. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Hoquiam River, Hoquiam, WA'' ((RIN1625–AA09) (Docket No. USCG–2014–1029)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1434. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Ontonagon River, Ontonagon, MI'' ((RIN1625–AA09) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0082)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1435. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Drawbridge Operation Regulation; Taylor Bayou Outfall Canal (Joint Outfall Canal), TX'' ((RIN1625–AA09) (Docket No. USCG–2014–0386)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1436. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Special Local Regulation; Hebda Cup Rowing Regatta; Detroit River, Wyandotte, MI'' ((RIN1625–AA08) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0190)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1437. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Special Local Regulation; Glass City Scrimmage; Maumee River, Toldeo, OH'' ((RIN1625–AA08) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0185)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1438. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Special Local Regulations and Safety Zones; Recurring Marine Events and Fireworks Displays within the Fifth Coast Guard District '' ((RIN1625–AA08) (Docket No. USCG–2014–1011)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1439. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Special Local Regulation; Charleston Race Week, Charleston Harbor; Charleston, SC'' ((RIN1625–AA08) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0018)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1440. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Special Local Regulation; San Salvador Launch and Procession; San Diego Bay, San Diego, CA'' ((RIN1625–AA08) (Docket No. USCG–2015–0138)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1441. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Consolidation of Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection for Outer Continental Shelf Activities; Eighth Coast Guard District; Technical, Organizational, and Conforming Amendments'' ((RIN1625–AB88) (Docket No. USCG–2013–0491)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1442. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Electrical Equipment in Hazardous Locations'' ((RIN1625–AC00) (Docket No. USCG–2012–0850)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1443. A communication from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Amendment of Section 73.202(b), FM Table of Allotments, FM Broadcast Stations (Sagaponack, New York)'' ((MB Docket No. 14–253) (DA 15–441)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1444. A communication from the Secretary of the Commission, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Energy and Water Use Labeling for Consumer Products Under the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (Energy Labeling Rule)'' (RIN3084–AB15) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1445. A communication from the Secretary of the Commission, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Energy Labeling Rule'' (RIN3084–AB03) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1446. A communication from the Secretary of the Commission, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Trade Regulation Rule Concerning Cooling-Off Period for Sales Made at Homes or at Certain Other Locations'' (RIN3084–AB10) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1447. A communication from the Secretary of the Commission, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Energy Labeling Rule'' (RIN3084–AB03) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 27, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation .

EC–1448. A communication from the Secretary of the Commission, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Revisions to Rules of

Practice'' (16 CFR Part 4) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 27, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1449. A communication from the Secretary of the Commission, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Revisions to Rules of Practice'' (16 CFR Parts 2, 3, and 4) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 27, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1450. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Amendment of Restricted Area Boundary Descriptions; Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA'' ((RIN2120–AA66) (Docket No. FAA–2015–0618)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1451. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Takeoff Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (81); Amdt. No. 3635'' (RIN2120–AA65) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1452. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Takeoff Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (119); Amdt. No. 3638'' (RIN2120–AA65) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1453. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Takeoff Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (62); Amdt. No. 3637'' (RIN2120–AA65) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1454. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Takeoff Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments (84); Amdt. No. 3636'' (RIN2120–AA65) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1455. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No . FAA–2014–0123)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1456. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Agusta S.p.A. Helicopters'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2015–0908)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1457. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Lockheed Martin Corporation/Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2014–0627)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1458. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; BAE Systems (Operations) Limited Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2014–0621)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1459. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Dassault Aviation Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2015–0825)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1460. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; PILATUS Aircraft Limited Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2015–0132)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1461. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2014–0920)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1462. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Rolls-Royce plc Turbofan Engines'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2014–0904)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1463. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Airworthiness Directives; Cessna Aircraft Company Airplanes'' ((RIN2120–AA64) (Docket No. FAA–2015–0839)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1464. A communication from the Management and Program Analyst, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''IFR Altitudes; Miscellaneous Amendments'' (RIN2120–AA63) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1465. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, Office of the General Counsel, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1466. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, Office of the General Counsel, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Administrator, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1467. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Revisions to the California State Implementation Plan, Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District'' (FRL No. 9926–19–Region 9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1468. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Revisions to the California State Implementation Plan, Feather River Air Quality Management District'' (FRL No. 9924–77–Region 9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1469. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Washington: Prevention of Significant Deterioration and Visibility Protection'' (FRL No. 9926–95–Region 10) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1470. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Pennsylvania; Redesignation of the Harrisburg-Lebanon-Carlisle-York Nonattainment Areas to Attainment for the 1997 Annual and the 2006 24-Hour Fine Particulate Matter Standard; Correction'' (FRL No. 9926–79–Region 3) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1471. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division,

Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Montana; Revised Format for Materials Being Incorporated by Reference for Montana'' (FRL No. 9924–80–Region 8) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1472. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Managing the Safety/Security Interface'' (Regulatory Guide 5.74, Revision 1) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–1473. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Finalizing Medicare Rules under Section 902 of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) for Calendar Year (CY) 2014''; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1474. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Open Payments Program Report to Congress''; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1475. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''IRC Section 5000C—Qualified Income Tax Treaty Countries'' (Notice 2015–35) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1476. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Applicable Federal Rates—May 2015'' (Rev. Rul. 2015–8) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1477. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Application of the General Welfare Exclusion to Indian Tribal Government Programs That Provide Benefits to Tribal Members'' (Notice 2015–34) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–1478. A communication from the Secretary of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities'' ((RIN1820–AB65) (Docket ID ED–2012–OSERS–0020)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–1479. A communication from the General Counsel, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Allocation of Assets in Single-Employer Plans; Benefits Payable in Terminated Single-Employer Plans; Interest Assumptions for Valuing and Paying Benefits'' (29 CFR Part 4022 and 29 CFR Part 4044) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 24, 2015; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–1480. A communication from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a financial report relative to the Medical Device User Fee Amendments of 2012 for fiscal year 2014; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–1481. A communication from the Director of Regulations Policy and Management Staff, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Administrative Detention of Drugs Intended for Human or Animal Use; Correction'' (Docket No. FDA–2013–N–0365) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 27, 2015; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–1482. A communication from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Amendment of Section 73.202(b), FM Table of Allotments, FM Broadcast Stations (Shelter Island, New York)'' ((MB Docket No. 14–255) (DA 15–442)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2015; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–1483. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 20–596, ''Limitations on the Use of Restraints Amendment Act of 2014'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1484. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–48, ''Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Clarification Temporary Amendment Act of 2015'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1485. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–49, ''Marijuana Possession Decriminalization Clarification Temporary Amendment Act of 2015'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1486. A communication from the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, three (3) reports relative to vacancies in the Department of Justice, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC–1487. A communication from the Chief Impact Analyst, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Updating Certain Delegations of Authority in VA Medical Regulations'' (RIN2900–AP17) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2015; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

EC–1488. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 20–492, ''Student Nutrition on Winter Weather Days Act of 2014'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1489. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–37, ''H Street, N.E., Retail Priority Area Clarification Temporary Amendment Act of 2015'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1490. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–38, ''Wage Theft Prevention Clarification Temporary Amendment Act of 2015'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1491. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–39, ''Public Charter School Priority Enrollment Temporary Amendment Act of 2015'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1492. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–40, ''Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools Salary Adjustment Temporary Amendment Act of 2015'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1493. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–41, ''Health Benefit Exchange Authority Financial Sustainability Temporary Amendment Act of 2015'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1494. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–42, ''Educator Evaluation Data Protection Temporary Amendment Act of 2015'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1495. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–43, ''At-Risk Funding Temporary Amendment Act of 2015'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1496. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–44, ''Vending Regulations Temporary Amendment Act of 2015'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–1497. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21–47, ''Testing Integrity Temporary Amendment Act of 2015'' ; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mrs. ERNST, Mrs. CAPITO, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. PETERS, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 1126. A bill to modify and extend the National Guard State Partnership Program; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. REED (for himself and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 1127. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the denial of deduction for certain excessive employee remuneration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. STABENOW:

S. 1128. A bill to establish an Early Federal Pell Grant Commitment Program; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. REED, and Mrs. BOXER):

S. 1129. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reform and enforce taxation of tobacco products; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. BOXER (for herself, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 1130. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve procedures for legal justice for members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. FRANKEN (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. BROWN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. COONS, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mrs. GILLIBRAND):

S. 1131. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to reduce the incidence of diabetes among Medicare beneficiaries, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MERKLEY:

S. 1132. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for patient protection by establishing safe nurse staffing levels at certain Medicare providers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. FRANKEN (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BROWN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. UDALL, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 1133. A bill to amend title 9 of the United States Code with respect to arbitration; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. AYOTTE (for herself and Mr. DONNELLY):

S. 1134. A bill to address prescription opioid abuse and heroin use; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. MCCASKILL (for herself and Mr. BURR):

S. 1135. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for fairness in hospital payments under the Medicare program; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. SCHUMER, and Mr. DAINES):

S. 1136. A bill relating to the modernization of C–130 aircraft to meet applicable regulations of the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. LEE, Mr. HATCH, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 1137. A bill to amend title 35, United States Code, and the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act to make improvements and technical corrections, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. PAUL (for himself and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 1138. A bill to reclassify certain low-level felonies as misdemeanors, to eliminate the increased penalties for cocaine offenses where the cocaine involved is cocaine base, to reinvest in our communities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. HIRONO, and Mr. HEINRICH):

S. Res. 154. A resolution designating May 16, 2015, as ''Kids to Parks Day''; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. INHOFE (for himself and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. Res. 155. A resolution establishing May 2, 2015, as a Day of Recognition for Ebola Orphans to express support for the children and families affected by the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa by promoting awareness of the children of West Africa who have been orphaned by the 2014 Ebola epidemic, celebrating those who have recognized and are working to fulfill the needs of children, and encouraging the people of the United States to continue to support the people of West Africa; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 185

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 185, a bill to create a limited population pathway for approval of certain antibacterial drugs.

S. 192

At the request of Mr. ALEXANDER, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) were added as cosponsors of S. 192, a bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act of 1965, and for other purposes.

S. 271

At the request of Mr. REID, the name of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 271, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain retired members of the uniformed services who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation, and for other purposes.

S. 373

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) was added as a cosponsor of S. 373, a bill to provide for the establishment of nationally uniform and environmentally sound standards governing discharges incidental to the normal operation of a vessel.

S. 423

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the names of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER) and the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) were added as cosponsors of S. 423, a bill to amend the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act to provide an exception to the annual written privacy notice requirement.

S. 433

At the request of Mr. SESSIONS, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) and the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 433, a bill to establish a benefit calculation methodology with respect to currency undervaluation for purposes of countervailing duty investigations and reviews, and for other purposes.

S. 450

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 450, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax rate parity among all tobacco products, and for other purposes.

S. 471

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 471, a bill to improve the provision of health care for women veterans by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 536

At the request of Mr. UDALL, the name of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 536, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income payments under the Indian Health Service Loan Repayment Program and certain amounts received under the Indian Health Professions Scholarship Program.

S. 578

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 578, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure more timely access to home health services for Medicare beneficiaries under the Medicare program.

S. 611

At the request of Mr. WICKER, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 611, a bill to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to reauthorize technical assistance to small public water systems, and for other purposes.

S. 654

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 654, a bill to exempt certain class A CDL drivers from the requirement to obtain a hazardous material endorsement while operating a service vehicle with a fuel tank containing 3,785 liters (1,000 gallons) or less of diesel fuel.

S. 713

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 713, a bill to prevent international violence against women, and for other purposes.

S. 730

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 730, a bill to permanently extend the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act of 2009.

S. 766

At the request of Mr. HOEVEN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 766, a bill to limit the retrieval of data from vehicle event data recorders, and for other purposes.

S. 774

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 774, a bill to amend the

Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council Act of 1978 to improve the examination of depository institutions, and for other purposes.

S. 776

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 776, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve access to medication therapy management under part D of the Medicare program.

S. 801

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the name of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) was added as a cosponsor of S. 801, a bill to amend the National Labor Relations Act to provide for appropriate designation of collective bargaining units.

S. 812

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the names of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) were added as cosponsors of S. 812, a bill to enhance the ability of community financial institutions to foster economic growth and serve their communities, boost small businesses, increase individual savings, and for other purposes.

S. 824

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 824, a bill to reauthorize the Export-Import Bank of the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 862

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) were added as cosponsors of S. 862, a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide more effective remedies to victims of discrimination in the payment of wages on the basis of sex, and for other purposes.

S. 871

At the request of Mr. MCCONNELL, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 871, a bill to provide for an application process for interested parties to apply for an area to be designated as a rural area, and for other purposes.

S. 893

At the request of Mr. WARNER, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 893, a bill to establish an Energy Productivity Innovation Challenge (EPIC) to assist energy policy innovation in the States to promote the goal of doubling electric and thermal energy productivity by January 1, 2030.

S. 898

At the request of Mr. KIRK, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 898, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the participation of optometrists in the National Health Service Corps scholarship and loan repayment programs, and for other purposes.

S. 933

At the request of Mr. ALEXANDER, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 933, a bill to amend the National Labor Relations Act with respect to the timing of elections and pre-election hearings and the identification of pre-election issues, and to require that lists of employees eligible to vote in organizing elections be provided to the National Labor Relations Board.

S. 957

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 957, a bill to increase access to capital for veteran entrepreneurs to help create jobs.

S. 974

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 974, a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to prohibit employment of children in tobacco-related agriculture by deeming such employment as oppressive child labor.

S. 993

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 993, a bill to increase public safety by facilitating collaboration among the criminal justice, juvenile justice, veterans treatment services, mental health treatment, and substance abuse systems.

S. 998

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) was added as a cosponsor of S. 998, a bill to establish a process for the consideration of temporary duty suspensions and reductions, and for other purposes.

S. 1032

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1032, a bill to expand the use of E–Verify, to hold employers accountable, and for other purposes.

S. 1117

At the request of Mr. JOHNSON, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1117, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to remove senior executives of the Department of Veterans Affairs for performance or misconduct to include removal of certain other employees of the Department, and for other purposes.

S. CON. RES. 4

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the names of the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) were added as cosponsors of S. Con. Res. 4, a concurrent resolution supporting the Local Radio Freedom Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 1138

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 1138 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1191, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 1141

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) and the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 1141 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1191, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 1145

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 1145 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1191, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 1146

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 1146 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1191, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 1147

At the request of Mr. BARRASSO, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 1147 proposed to H.R. 1191, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 1151

At the request of Mr. GARDNER, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr.

PORTMAN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 1151 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1191, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 1189

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 1189 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1191, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 1190

At the request of Mr. TOOMEY, the names of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 1190 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1191, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. REED (for himself and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 1127. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the denial of deduction for certain excessive employee remuneration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I am reintroducing the Stop Subsidizing Multimillion Dollar Corporate Bonuses Act with my colleague, Senator BLUMENTHAL. This bill closes a loophole that allows publicly traded corporations to deduct an executive's pay that exceeds $1 million from their tax bill.

Under current tax law, when a public corporation calculates its taxable income, it is generally permitted to deduct the cost of compensation from its revenues, with limits up to $1 million for some of the firm's most senior executives. However, a loophole relating to performance-based compensation has allowed many public corporations to avoid such limits and freely deduct excessive executive compensation. To illustrate how this loophole works, if a CEO receives $15 million in performance-based compensation in a given year, the public corporation's taxable income would decline by $15 million. With the current corporate tax rate at 35 percent, the corporation in this case would receive a tax cut of $5.25 million.

The Stop Subsidizing Multimillion Dollar Corporate Bonuses Act would instead allow a public corporation to deduct all forms of compensation up to only $1 million per employee. Using the same example above, a profitable public corporation, after deducting only $1 million from the $15 million in CEO compensation, would then pay $4.9 million in taxes. In short, instead of costing the government $5.25 million, this public corporation will be paying $4.9 million in taxes, reducing the burden on middle-class families and our national debt.

Indeed, over a 10-year window, the Joint Committee on Taxation, in their most recent assessment, estimated that closing this loophole would save U.S. taxpayers over $50 billion.

First, our legislation extends section 162(m) of the Tax Code to apply to all employees of publicly traded corporations so that all compensation is subject to a deductibility cap of $1 million. Publicly traded corporations would still be permitted to pay their executives as much as they desire, but compensation above and beyond $1 million would no longer be subsidized through our Tax Code.

Second, our bill removes the exemption for performance-based compensation, which currently permits compensation deductions above and beyond $1 million when executives have met performance benchmarks set by the corporation's board of directors. As a result, publicly traded corporations would still be able to incentivize their executives, but all such incentives would be subject to a corporate deductibility cap of $1 million.

Finally, our legislation makes a technical correction to ensure that all publicly traded corporations that are required to provide quarterly and annual reports to their investors under Securities and Exchange Commission rules and regulations are subject to section 162(m). Currently, this section of the Tax Code only covers some publicly traded corporations that are required to provide these periodic reports to their shareholders. Discouraging unrestrained compensation packages shouldn't hinge on whether a publicly traded corporation falls into one SEC reporting requirement or another, and our bill closes this technical loophole.

With this legislation, we aim to put an end to some of the extravagant tax breaks that exclusively benefit public corporations. This is simply a matter of fairness, ensuring that corporations—and not taxpayers who face their own challenges in this economy—are paying for the multimillion dollar bonuses they have decided to dole out.

I want to thank Senator BLUMENTHAL for working with me on this issue, and I urge our colleagues to join us in cosponsoring this legislation.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. LEE, Mr. HATCH, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 1137. A bill to amend title 35, United States Code, and the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act to make improvements and technical corrections, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the U.S. is the world's leader in innovation. Yet today, our patent system—which has allowed generations of inventors, innovators, and entrepreneurs to thrive—is under attack from bad actors, also known as ''patent trolls''.

Abusive patent litigation is stifling the innovation and entrepreneurship that our patent system has been designed to protect. Over the last decade, there has been an explosion in the growth of this type of harmful litigation as those who exploit abusive patent litigation tactics for financial gain have taken aim at businesses operating in every sector of our economy.

From Main Street to Wall Street to Silicon Valley, from start-ups to neighborhood restaurants to major retailers—businesses and consumers across the country are being harmed. Because of this abuse, innovative companies spend less time and resources on research and innovation, and often must have their talented workforce devote many man-hours to defending against baseless claims. This comes at the expense of discovering that next medical breakthrough or rolling out new technologies that will create jobs.

Patent trolls prey on businesses by filing frivolous lawsuits and employing an array of heavy-handed and deceptive tactics to scare plaintiffs into settlements. These bad actors send vague and overly broad demand letters, exploit loose pleading standards that provide little substance of the alleged infringement claims, hide their identity behind shell companies, and use the threat of high cost patent litigation discovery as a weapon. This is a drag on our economy, costing an estimated $80 billion annually in direct and indirect costs. This means fewer jobs created, less innovation, and higher costs for consumers.

To restore integrity to our patent system, today, along with Judiciary Committee Ranking Member LEAHY, and Senators CORNYN, SCHUMER, LEE, HATCH and KLOBUCHAR, I am introducing the Protecting American Talent and Entrepreneurship Act, PATENT Act.

This builds upon the reforms made by the America Invents Act and will promote the intellectual property rights that our Founding Fathers recognized are key to American innovation. The provisions of the PATENT Act will promote more transparency in patent ownership, establish a clear, uniform standard for pleading in patent cases, and deter abusive litigation. I would like to note some of the key provisions in the bill.

The PATENT Act will require plaintiffs in a patent suit to identify each patent and each claim that is allegedly infringed, which products are infringing, and include a description of the alleged infringement. The current requirements for pleading in a patent

litigation have been subject to scrutiny by the courts and amount to little more than notice pleading. By providing these congressionally enacted bright line rules across judicial jurisdictions, defendants will be able to better respond to claims and courts will be able to resolve litigation more efficiently.

This legislation will place reasonable limitations on discovery by requiring courts to stay discovery pending the resolution of specific preliminary motions, including motions to dismiss and transfer venue. It also calls on the Judicial Conference to develop rules and procedures to promote efficient and effective discovery, including examining to what extent each party is entitled to ''core documentary evidence''.

While current law allows for fee shifting in patent cases, the reality is that bad actors are almost never subject to fee shifting, leading to an explosion in abusive litigation. The PATENT Act provides that reasonable attorney fees will be awarded if the prevailing party in litigation makes a showing, and the court finds, that the non-prevailing party's conduct was not ''objectively reasonable,'' unless special circumstances make an award unjust. This measure will help to deter the filing of frivolous claims. The bill also provides a process for the recovery of fees from an abusive litigant.

Further, the bill will help stop the widespread sending of fraudulent or materially misleading demand letters by building on existing Federal Trade Commission authority to go after those who violate Section 5 of the FTC Act in connection with patent assertion by engaging in widespread demand letter abuse. This provision has been carefully constructed so that it will not impinge upon legitimate licensing activity or expand FTC authority. We worked on the language contained in this provision with Chairman THUNE and his staff, as the Commerce Committee also has jurisdiction over the FTC, and it was important to us to get their input.

The bill also will help to protect small businesses, who are being targeted for doing nothing more than using products which they bought off-the-shelf, by allowing a suit against an end-user to be stayed while the manufacturer litigates the alleged infringement.

This bipartisan legislation is the result of a careful and deliberative process in which we worked with many stakeholders representing almost every area of the economy, the judiciary, and the administration. Since the process started in the last Congress, we've listened and tried to be responsive to all the concerns raised from the different industries and constituencies. As a result, we have made great strides in addressing issues that have been raised along the way and getting stakeholders comfortable with the bill. So I believe the PATENT Act strikes a good balance. Our intent is to protect the rights of patent holders while addressing the problem of abusive litigation. The PATENT Act does that.

As we move forward, we also intend to try to address other concerns that have been raised more recently by patent holders about the Patent and Trademark Office's IPR process. We want to make sure that the PTO processes are not being abused, and instead are being utilized as envisioned by the America Invents Act.

I would like to especially thank Ranking Member LEAHY for being an outstanding partner on the Judiciary Committee on all things intellectual property, Senators CORNYN and SCHUMER for their sustained leadership on the patent troll issue, Senator LEE for his hard work on the demand letter provision, Senator HATCH for his valuable work on the recovery provision, and Senator KLOBUCHAR for her constructive involvement in moving the bill forward. Because of these efforts, we have a stronger bill and are closer to restoring the integrity of the patent system. I am hopeful that we can move in a deliberative and productive way through Committee so we can get to the floor in a timely manner.

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

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

S. 1137

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Protecting American Talent and Entrepreneurship Act of 2015'' or the ''PATENT Act''.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2. Definitions.
Sec. 3. Pleading requirements for patent infringement actions.
Sec. 4. Customer-suit exception.
Sec. 5. Discovery limits.
Sec. 6. Procedures and practices to implement recommendations of the Judicial Conference.
Sec. 7. Fees and other expenses.
Sec. 8. Requirement of clarity and specificity in demand letters.
Sec. 9. Abusive demand letters.
Sec. 10. Transparency of patent transfer.
Sec. 11. Protection of intellectual property licenses in bankruptcy.
Sec. 12. Small business education, outreach, and information access.
Sec. 13. Studies on patent transactions, quality, and examination.
Sec. 14. Technical corrections to the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act and other improvements.
Sec. 15. Effective date.
Sec. 16. Severability.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

(1) DIRECTOR.—The term ''Director'' means the Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

(2) OFFICE.—The term ''Office'' means the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

SEC. 3. PLEADING REQUIREMENTS FOR PATENT INFRINGEMENT ACTIONS.

(a) ELIMINATION OF FORM 18.—Not later than 1 month after the date of enactment of this Act, the Supreme Court, using existing resources, shall eliminate Form 18 in the Appendix to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (Complaint for Patent Infringement).

(b) PLEADING REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) AMENDMENT.—Chapter 29 of title 35, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 281 the following:

''§ 281A. Pleading requirements for patent infringement actions

''(a) PLEADING REQUIREMENTS.—In a civil action in which a party asserts a claim for relief arising under any Act of Congress relating to patents, a party alleging infringement shall include in a complaint, counterclaim, or cross-claim for patent infringement, except as provided in subsection (c), the following:

''(1) An identification of each patent allegedly infringed.

''(2) An identification of each claim of each patent identified under paragraph (1) that is allegedly infringed.

''(3) For each claim identified under paragraph (2), an identification of each accused process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter (referred to in this section as an 'accused instrumentality') alleged to infringe the claim.

''(4) For each accused instrumentality identified under paragraph (3), an identification with particularity, if known, of—

''(A) the name or model number (or a representative model number) of each accused instrumentality; or

''(B) if there is no name or model number, a description of each accused instrumentality.

''(5) For each claim identified under paragraph (2), a description of the elements thereof that are alleged to be infringed by the accused instrumentality and how the accused instrumentality is alleged to infringe those elements.

''(6) For each claim of indirect infringement, a description of the acts of the alleged infringer that are alleged to contribute to or induce the direct infringement.

''(b) DISMISSAL FOR FAILURE TO MEET PLEADING REQUIREMENTS.—The court shall, on the motion of any party, dismiss any count or counts of the complaint, counterclaim, or cross-claim for patent infringement if the requirements of paragraphs (1) through (6) of subsection (a) are not met with respect to such count or counts. The fact that a party pleads in accordance with subsection (c) shall not be a basis for dismissal if the party nonetheless states a plausible claim for relief sufficient under the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

''(c) INFORMATION NOT ACCESSIBLE.—If some subset of information required to comply with subsection (a) is not accessible to a party after an inquiry reasonable under the circumstances, consistent with rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, an allegation requiring that information may be based upon a general description of that information, along with a statement as to why the information is not accessible.

''(d) AMENDMENT OF PLEADINGS.—Nothing in this provision shall be construed to affect a party's leave to amend pleadings as specified in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Amendments permitted by the court are subject to the pleading requirements set forth in this section.

''(e) CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.—A party required to disclose information described under subsection (a) may file information believed to be confidential under seal, with a motion setting forth good cause for such sealing. If such motion is denied by the court, the party may seek to file an amended pleading.

''(f) EXEMPTION.—Subsection (a) shall not apply to a civil action that includes a claim for relief arising under section 271(e)(2).

"§ 281B. Early disclosure requirements for patent infringement actions

''(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

''(1) the term 'financial interest'—

''(A) means—

''(i) with regard to a patent or patents, the right of a person to receive proceeds from the assertion of the patent or patents, including a fixed or variable portion of such proceeds; and

''(ii) with regard to the patentee, direct or indirect ownership or control by a person of more than 20 percent of the patentee; and

''(B) does not mean—

''(i) ownership of shares or other interests in a mutual or common investment fund, unless the owner of such interest participates in the management of such fund; or

''(ii) the proprietary interest of a policyholder in a mutual insurance company or a depositor in a mutual savings association, or a similar proprietary interest, unless the outcome of the proceeding could substantially affect the value of such interest;

''(2) the term 'patentee' means a party in a civil action that files a pleading subject to the requirements of section 281A;

''(3) the term 'proceeding' means all stages of a civil action, including pretrial and trial proceedings and appellate review; and

''(4) the term 'ultimate parent entity' has the meaning given the term in section 261A.

''(b) EARLY DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS.—Notwithstanding the requirements of section 299B, a patentee shall disclose to the court and each adverse party, not later than 14 days after the date on which the patentee serves or files the pleading subject to the requirements of section 281A—

''(1) the identity of each—

''(A) assignee of the patent or patents at issue, and any ultimate parent entity thereof;

''(B) entity with a right to sublicense to unaffiliated entities or to enforce the patent or patents at issue, and any ultimate parent entity thereof; and

''(C) entity, other than an entity the ultimate parent of which is disclosed under subparagraph (A) or (B), that the patentee knows to have a financial interest in—

''(i) the patent or patents at issue; or

''(ii) the patentee, and any ultimate parent entity thereof; and

''(2) for each patent that the patentee alleges to be infringed—

''(A) a list of each complaint, counterclaim, or cross-claim filed by the patentee or an affiliate thereof in the United States during the 3-year period preceding the date of the filing of the action, and any other complaint, counterclaim, or cross-claim filed in the United States during that period of which the patentee has knowledge, that asserts or asserted such patent, including—

''(i) the caption;

''(ii) civil action number;

''(iii) the court where the action was filed; and

''(iv) if applicable, any court to which the action was transferred;

''(B) a statement as to whether the patent is subject to an assurance made by the party to a standards development organization to license others under such patent if—

''(i) the assurance specifically identifies such patent or claims therein; and

''(ii) the allegation of infringement relates to such standard; and

''(C) a statement as to whether the Federal Government has imposed specific licensing requirements with respect to such patent.

''(c) DISCLOSURE OF FINANCIAL INTEREST.—

''(1) PUBLICLY TRADED.—For purposes of subsection (b)(1)(C), if the financial interest is held by a corporation traded on a public stock exchange, an identification of the name of the corporation and the public exchange listing shall satisfy the disclosure requirement.

''(2) NOT PUBLICLY TRADED.—For purposes of subsection (b)(1)(C), if the financial interest is not held by a publicly traded corporation, the disclosure shall satisfy the disclosure requirement if the information identifies—

''(A) in the case of a partnership, the name of the partnership, the address of the principal place of business, and the name and correspondence address of the registered agent;

''(B) in the case of a corporation, the name of the corporation, the location of incorporation, and the address of the principal place of business; and

''(C) for each individual, the name and correspondence address of that individual.

''(d) PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE.—Not later than 1 month after the date on which the disclosures required under subsection (b) are made, the patentee shall provide to the United States Patent and Trademark Office a filing containing the information disclosed pursuant to subsection (b)(1).

''(e) CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—A patentee required to disclose information under subsection (b) may file, under seal, information believed to be confidential, with a motion setting forth good cause for such sealing.

''(2) HOME ADDRESS INFORMATION.—For purposes of this section, the home address of an individual shall be considered to be confidential information.''.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 29 of title 35, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 281 the following new items:

''281A. Pleading requirements for patent infringement actions.

''281B. Early disclosure requirements for patent infringement actions.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act and shall apply to any action for which a complaint is filed on or after that date.

SEC. 4. CUSTOMER-SUIT EXCEPTION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 29 of title 35, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"§ 299A. Customer stay

''(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

''(1) the term 'covered customer' means a retailer or end user that is accused of infringing a patent or patents in dispute based on—

''(A) the sale, or offer for sale, of a covered product or covered process without material modification of the product or process in a manner that is alleged to infringe a patent or patents in dispute; or

''(B) the use by such retailer, the retailer's end user customer, or an end user of a covered product or covered process without material modification of the product or process in a manner that is alleged to infringe a patent or patents in dispute;

''(2) the term 'covered manufacturer' means a person who manufactures or supplies, or causes the manufacture or supply of, a covered product or covered process, or a relevant part thereof;

''(3) the term 'covered process' means a process, method, or a relevant part thereof, that is alleged to infringe the patent or patents in dispute where such process, method, or relevant part thereof is implemented by an apparatus, material, system, software or other instrumentality that is provided by the covered manufacturer;

''(4) the term 'covered product' means a component, product, system, service, or a relevant part thereof, that—

''(A) is alleged to infringe the patent or patents in dispute; or

''(B) implements a process alleged to infringe the patent or patents in dispute;

''(5) for purposes of this section, the term 'end user' shall include an affiliate of such an end user, but shall not include an entity that manufactures or causes the manufacture of a covered product or covered process or a relevant part thereof;

''(6) the term 'retailer' means an entity that generates its revenues predominately through the sale to the public of consumer goods or services, or an affiliate of such entity, but shall not include an entity that manufactures or causes the manufacture of a covered product or covered process or a relevant part thereof; and

''(7) for purposes of the definitions in subparagraphs (5) and (6), the terms 'use' and 'sale' mean the use and the sale, respectively, within the meanings given those terms under section 271.

''(b) MOTION FOR STAY.—In a civil action in which a party asserts a claim for relief arising under any Act of Congress relating to patents (other than an action that includes a cause of action described in section 271(e)), the court shall grant a motion to stay at least the portion of the action against a covered customer that relates to infringement of a patent involving a covered product or covered process if—

''(1) the covered manufacturer is a party to the action or a separate action in a Federal court of the United States involving the same patent or patents relating to the same covered product or covered process;

''(2) the covered customer agrees to be bound as to issues determined in an action described in paragraph (1) without a full and fair opportunity to separately litigate any such issue, but only as to those issues for which all other elements of the common law doctrine of issue preclusion are met; and

''(3) the motion is filed after the first pleading in the action but not later than the later of—

''(A) 120 days after service of the first pleading or paper in the action that specifically identifies the covered product or covered process as a basis for the alleged infringement of the patent by the covered customer, and specifically identifies how the covered product or covered process is alleged to infringe the patent; or

''(B) the date on which the first scheduling order in the case is entered.

''(c) MANUFACTURER CONSENT IN CERTAIN CASES.—If the covered manufacturer has been made a party to the action on motion by the covered customer, then a motion under subsection (b) may only be granted if the covered manufacturer and the covered customer agree in writing to the stay.

''(d) LIFT OF STAY.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—A stay entered under this section may be lifted upon grant of a motion based on a showing that—

''(A) the action involving the covered manufacturer will not resolve major issues in the suit against the covered customer, such as that a covered product or covered process identified in the motion to lift the stay is not a material part of the claimed invention or inventions in the patent or patents in dispute; or

''(B) the stay unreasonably prejudices or would be manifestly unjust to the party seeking to lift the stay.

''(2) SEPARATE ACTIONS.—In the case of a stay entered under this section based on the participation of the covered manufacturer in a separate action described in subsection (b)(1), a motion under paragraph (1) may

only be granted if the court in such separate action determines that the showing required under paragraph (1) has been made.

''(e) WAIVER OF ESTOPPEL EFFECT.—If, following the grant of a motion to stay under this section, the covered manufacturer in an action described in subsection (b)(1)—

''(1) obtains or consents to entry of a consent judgment involving one or more of the issues that gave rise to the stay; or

''(2) fails to prosecute to a final, non-appealable judgment a final decision as to one or more of the issues that gave rise to the stay,

the court may, upon motion, determine that such consent judgment or unappealed final decision shall not be binding on the covered customer with respect to one or more of the issues that gave rise to the stay based on a showing that such an outcome would unreasonably prejudice or be manifestly unjust to the covered customer in light of the circumstances of the case.

''(f) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the ability of a court to grant any stay, expand any stay granted pursuant to this section, or grant any motion to intervene, if otherwise permitted by law.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 29 of title 35, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''299A. Customer stay.''.

SEC. 5. DISCOVERY LIMITS.

(a) AMENDMENT.—Chapter 29 of title 35, United States Code, as amended by section 4, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''§ 299B. Discovery in patent infringement action

''(a) DISCOVERY IN PATENT INFRINGEMENT ACTION.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsections (b) and (c), in a civil action arising under any Act of Congress relating to patents, discovery shall be stayed during the pendency of 1 or more motions described in paragraph (2) if the motion or motions were filed prior to the first responsive pleading.

''(2) MOTIONS DESCRIBED.—The motions described in this paragraph are—

''(A) a motion to dismiss;

''(B) a motion to transfer venue; and

''(C) a motion to sever accused infringers.

''(b) DISCRETION TO EXPAND SCOPE OF DISCOVERY.—

''(1) RESOLUTION OF MOTIONS.—A court may allow limited discovery necessary to resolve a motion described in subsection (a) or a motion for preliminary relief properly raised by a party before or during the pendency of a motion described in subsection (a).

''(2) ADDITIONAL DISCOVERY.—On motion, a court may allow additional discovery if the court finds that such discovery is necessary to preserve evidence or otherwise prevent specific prejudice to a party.

''(c) EXCLUSION FROM DISCOVERY LIMITATION.—

''(1) VOLUNTARY EXCLUSION.—The parties to an action described in subsection (a) may voluntarily consent to be excluded, in whole or in part, from the limitation on discovery under subsection (a).

''(2) CLAIMS UNDER SECTION 271(e).—This section shall not apply to a civil action that includes a claim for relief arising under section 271(e).

''(d) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.—

''(1) TIMELINE FOR RESPONSIVE PLEADINGS.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter the time provided by the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure for the filing of responsive pleadings.

''(2) EXCHANGE OF CONTENTIONS.—Nothing in this section shall prohibit a court from ordering or local rules from requiring the exchange of contentions regarding infringement, non-infringement, invalidity or other issues, by interrogatories or other written initial disclosures, at an appropriate time determined by the court.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 29 of title 35, United States Code, as amended by section 4, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 299A the following:

''299B. Discovery in patent infringement action.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act and shall apply to any action for which a complaint is filed on or after that date.

SEC. 6. PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUDICIAL CONFERENCE.

(a) JUDICIAL CONFERENCE RULES AND PROCEDURES ON DISCOVERY BURDENS AND COSTS.—

(1) RULES AND PROCEDURES.—The Judicial Conference of the United States, using existing resources, should develop rules and procedures to implement the discovery proposals described in paragraph (2) to address concerns regarding the asymmetries in discovery burdens and costs that may arise in a civil action arising under any Act of Congress relating to patents.

(2) RULES AND PROCEDURES TO BE CONSIDERED.—The rules and procedures to be developed under paragraph (1) should address each of the following:

(A) DISCOVERY OF CORE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE.—To what extent each party to the action is entitled to receive core documentary evidence and should be responsible for the costs of producing core documentary evidence within the possession or control of each such party, and to what extent each party to the action may seek noncore documentary discovery as otherwise provided in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

(B) ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION.—If the parties request discovery of electronic communication, how such discovery should be phased to occur relative to the exchange of initial disclosures and core documentary evidence, and appropriate limitations to apply to such discovery.

(C) ADDITIONAL DOCUMENT DISCOVERY.—The manner and extent to which the following should apply:

(i) IN GENERAL.—Each party to the action may seek any additional document discovery beyond core documentary evidence as permitted under the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, if such party bears the reasonable costs, including reasonable attorney's fees, of the additional document discovery.

(ii) REQUIREMENTS FOR ADDITIONAL DOCUMENT DISCOVERY.—Unless the parties mutually agree otherwise, no party may be permitted additional document discovery unless such a party posts a bond, or provides other security, in an amount sufficient to cover the expected costs of such additional document discovery, or makes a showing to the court that such party has the financial capacity to pay the costs of such additional document discovery.

(iii) GOOD CAUSE MODIFICATION.—A court, upon motion and for good cause shown, may modify the requirements of subparagraphs (A) and (B) and any definition under paragraph (3). Not later than 30 days after the pretrial conference under rule 16 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, the parties shall jointly submit any proposed modifications of the requirements of subparagraphs (A) and (B) and any definition under paragraph (3), unless the parties do not agree, in which case each party shall submit any proposed modification of such party and a summary of the disagreement over the modification.

(iv) COMPUTER CODE.—A court, upon motion and for good cause shown, may determine that computer code should be included in the discovery of core documentary evidence. The discovery of computer code shall occur after the parties have exchanged initial disclosures and other core documentary evidence.

(D) DISCOVERY SEQUENCE AND SCOPE.—The manner and extent to which the parties shall discuss and address in the written report filed pursuant to rule 26(f) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure the views and proposals of each party on the following:

(i) When the discovery of core documentary evidence should be completed.

(ii) Whether additional document discovery will be sought under subparagraph (C).

(iii) Any issues about infringement, invalidity, or damages that, if resolved before the additional discovery described in subparagraph (C) commences, might simplify or streamline the case.

(3) SCOPE OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE.—In developing rules or procedures under this section, the Judicial Conference should consider which kinds of evidence constitute ''core documentary evidence''.

(4) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection the term ''electronic communication'' means any form of electronic communication, including email, text message, or instant message.

(b) JUDICIAL CONFERENCE PATENT CASE MANAGEMENT.—The Judicial Conference of the United States, using existing resources, should develop case management procedures to be implemented by the United States district courts and the United States Court of Federal Claims for any civil action arising under any Act of Congress relating to patents, including initial disclosure and early case management conference practices that—

(1) will identify any potential dispositive issues of the case; and

(2) focus on early summary judgment motions when resolution of issues may lead to expedited disposition of the case.

SEC. 7. FEES AND OTHER EXPENSES.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that, in patent cases, reasonable attorney fees should be paid by a non-prevailing party whose litigation position or conduct is not objectively reasonable. As the Supreme Court wrote in adopting this legal standard in the context of fee shifting under section 1447 of title 28, United States Code, this standard is intended to strike a balance; in patent cases, a more appropriate balance between protecting the right of a patent holder to enforce its patent on the one hand, and deterring abuses in patent litigation and threats thereof on the other.

(b) AMENDMENT.—Section 285 of title 35, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 285. Fees and other expenses

''(a) AWARD.—In connection with a civil action in which any party asserts a claim for relief arising under any Act of Congress relating to patents, upon motion by a prevailing party, the court shall determine whether the position of the non-prevailing party was objectively reasonable in law and fact, and whether the conduct of the non-prevailing party was objectively reasonable. If the court finds that the position of the non-prevailing party was not objectively reasonable in law or fact or that the conduct of the non-prevailing party was not objectively reasonable, the court shall award reasonable attorney fees to the prevailing party unless

special circumstances would make an award unjust.

''(b) COVENANT NOT TO SUE.—A party to a civil action who asserts a claim for relief arising under any Act of Congress relating to patents against another party, and who subsequently unilaterally (i) seeks dismissal of the action without consent of the other party and (ii) extends to such other party a covenant not to sue for infringement with respect to the patent or patents at issue, may be the subject of a motion for attorney fees under subsection (a) as if it were a nonprevailing party, unless the party asserting such claim would have been entitled, at the time that such covenant was extended, to dismiss voluntarily the action without a court order under rule 41 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, or the interests of justice require otherwise.

''(c) RECOVERY OF AWARD.—

''(1) CERTIFICATION; DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTED PARTIES.—

''(A) INITIAL STATEMENT.—A party defending against a claim of infringement may file, not later than 14 days before a scheduling conference is to be held or a scheduling order is due under rule 16(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, a statement that such party holds a good faith belief, based on publicly-available information and any other information known to such party, that the primary business of the party alleging infringement is the assertion and enforcement of patents or the licensing resulting therefrom.

''(B) CERTIFICATION.—Not later than 45 days after being served with an initial statement under subparagraph (A), a party alleging infringement shall file a certification that—

''(i) establishes and certifies to the court, under oath, that it will have sufficient funds available to satisfy any award of reasonable attorney fees under this section if an award is assessed;

''(ii) demonstrates that its primary business is not the assertion and enforcement of patents or the licensing resulting therefrom;

''(iii) identifies interested parties, if any, as defined in paragraph (2) of this subsection; or

''(iv) states that it has no such interested parties.

A party alleging infringement shall have an ongoing obligation to supplement its certification under this subparagraph within 30 days after a material change to the information provided in its certification.

''(C) NOTICE TO INTERESTED PARTY.—A party that files a certification under subparagraph (B)(iii) shall, prior to filing the certification, provide each identified interested party actual notice in writing by service of notice in any district where the interested party may be found, such that jurisdiction shall be established over each interested party to the action for purposes of enforcing an award of attorney fees under this section, consistent with the Constitution of the United States. The notice shall identify the action, the parties, the patents at issue, and the interest qualifying the party to be an interested party. The notice shall inform the recipient that the recipient may be held accountable under this subsection for any award of attorney fees, or a portion thereof, resulting from the action in the event the party alleging infringement cannot satisfy the full amount of such an award, unless the recipient renounces its interest pursuant to subparagraph (E) or is otherwise exempt from the applicability of this subsection.

''(D) ACCOUNTABILITY FOR INTERESTED PARTIES.—Any interested parties who are timely served with actual notice pursuant to subparagraph (C) and do not renounce their interests pursuant to subparagraph (E) or are not otherwise exempt from the applicability of this subsection may be held accountable for any fees, or a portion thereof, awarded under this section in the event that the party alleging infringement cannot satisfy the full amount of the award. If a true and correct certification under clause (i) or (ii) of subparagraph (B) is timely filed with the court, interested parties shall not be subject to this subparagraph.

''(E) RENUNCIATION OF INTEREST.—Any recipient of a notice under subparagraph (C) may submit a statement of renunciation of interest in a binding document with notice to the court and parties in the action not later than 120 days after receipt of the notice under subparagraph (C). The statement shall be required to renounce only such interest as would qualify the recipient as an interested party.

''(F) INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION EXCEPTION.—Any institution of higher education (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)) or under equivalent laws in foreign jurisdictions), or a non-profit technology transfer organization whose primary purpose is to facilitate the commercialization of technologies developed by 1 or more institutions of higher education, may exempt itself from the applicability of this subsection by filing a certification that it qualifies for the exception provided for in this subparagraph with the court and providing notice to the parties.

''(G) INTEREST OF JUSTICE EXCEPTION.—Any recipient of a notice under subparagraph (C) may intervene in the action for purposes of contesting its identification as an interested party or its liability under this subsection, and a court may exempt any party identified as an interested party from the applicability of this subsection as the interest of justice requires.

''(2) INTERESTED PARTY.—In this section, the term 'interested party'—

''(A) means a person who has a substantial financial interest related to the proceeds from any settlement, license, or damages award resulting from the enforcement of the patent in the action by the party alleging infringement;

''(B) does not include an attorney or law firm providing legal representation in the action if the sole basis for the financial interest of the attorney or law firm in the outcome of the action arises from the attorney or law firm's receipt of compensation reasonably related to the provision of the legal representation;

''(C) does not include a person who has assigned all right, title, and interest in a patent, except for passive receipt of income, to an entity described in paragraph (1)(F), or who has a right to receive any portion of such passive income; and

''(D) does not include a person who would be an interested party under subparagraph (A) but whose financial interest is based solely on an equity or security interest established when the party alleging infringement's primary business was not the assertion and enforcement of patents or the licensing resulting therefrom.

''(d) CLAIMS UNDER SECTION 271(e).—

''(1) APPLICABILITY.—Subsections (a), (b), and (c) shall not apply to a civil action that includes a claim for relief arising under section 271(e).

''(2) AWARD IN CERTAIN CLAIMS UNDER SECTION 271(E).—In a civil action that includes a claim for relief arising under section 271(e), the court may in exceptional cases award reasonable attorney fees to the prevailing party.''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT AND AMENDMENT.—

(1) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The item relating to section 285 of the table of sections for chapter 29 of title 35, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''285. Fees and other expenses.''.

(2) AMENDMENT.—Section 273 of title 35, United States Code, is amended by striking subsections (f) and (g).

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act and shall apply to any action filed on or after such date.

SEC. 8. REQUIREMENT OF CLARITY AND SPECIFICITY IN DEMAND LETTERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 29 of title 35, United States Code, as amended by section 5, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''§ 299C. Pre-suit written notice

''(a) APPLICABILITY.—Subsection (b) shall not apply—

''(1) to written communication between parties—

''(A) regarding existing licensing agreements;

''(B) as part of an ongoing licensing negotiation, provided that the initial written notice complied with the requirements of subsection (b) of this section; or

''(C) sent after the initial written notice, provided that the initial written notice complied with the requirements of subsection (b) of this section; or

''(2) if the court determines it is in the interest of justice to waive the requirements of subsection (b).

''(b) WRITTEN NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—In a civil action alleging infringement of a patent in which the plaintiff has provided written notice of the accusation of infringement to the party accused of infringement prior to filing the action, the initial written notice shall contain the information required under paragraph (2) or be subject to paragraph (3).

''(2) REQUIRED INFORMATION PROVIDED IN INITIAL WRITTEN NOTICE.—The initial written notice described in paragraph (1) shall contain, at a minimum—

''(A) an identification of—

''(i) each patent believed to be infringed, including the patent number; and

''(ii) at least one claim of each patent that is believed to be infringed;

''(B) an identification of each product, process, apparatus, or chemical composition, including any manufacturer thereof, that is believed to infringe one or more claims of each patent under subparagraph (A);

''(C) a clear and detailed description of the reasons why the plaintiff believes each patent identified under subparagraph (A) is infringed;

''(D) notice to the intended recipient that the intended recipient may have the right to a stay of any suit in accordance with section 299A;

''(E) the identity of any person with the right to enforce each patent under subparagraph (A); and

''(F) if compensation is proposed, a short and plain statement as to how that proposed compensation was determined.

''(3) ADDITIONAL TIME TO RESPOND.—If the initial written notice provided to the defendant prior to the filing of the civil action did not contain the information required by paragraph (2), the defendant's time to respond to the complaint shall be extended by an additional 30 days.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 29 of title 35, United States Code, as amended by section 5, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''299C. Pre-suit written notice.''.

(c) WILLFUL INFRINGEMENT.—Section 284 of title 35, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the first undesignated paragraph, by striking ''Upon finding'' and inserting ''(a) IN GENERAL.—Upon finding'';

(2) in the second undesignated paragraph, by striking ''When the damages'' and inserting ''(b) ASSESSMENT BY COURT; TREBLE DAMAGES.—When the damages'';

(3) by inserting after subsection (b), as designated by subparagraph (B), the following:

''(c) WILLFUL INFRINGEMENT.—A claimant seeking to establish willful infringement may not rely on evidence of pre-suit notification of infringement unless that notification complies with the standards set out in section 299C(b)(2).''; and

(4) in the last undesignated paragraph, by striking ''The court'' and inserting ''(d) EXPERT TESTIMONY.—The court''.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act and shall apply to any action for which a complaint is filed on or after that date.

SEC. 9. ABUSIVE DEMAND LETTERS.

(a) BAD-FAITH DEMAND LETTERS.—Chapter 29 of title 35, United States Code, as amended by section 8, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''§ 299D. Bad-faith demand letters

''(a) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term 'affiliated person' means a person affiliated with the intended recipient of a written communication.

''(b) CIVIL PENALTIES FOR CERTAIN UNFAIR OR DECEPTIVE ACTS OR PRACTICES IN CONNECTION WITH ABUSIVE DEMAND LETTERS.—A person who commits an unfair or deceptive act or practice within the meaning of section 5(a)(1) of the Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C. 45(a)(1)), in connection with the assertion of a United States patent, and who engages in the widespread sending of written communications representing that the intended recipients, or any persons affiliated with those recipients, are or may be infringing, or have or may have infringed, the patent and may bear liability or owe compensation to another, shall be deemed to have violated a rule defining an unfair or deceptive act or practice described under section 18(a)(1)(B) of the Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C. 57a(a)(1)(B)) if—

''(1)(A) the communications falsely—

''(i) represent that administrative or judicial relief has been sought against the recipient or others; or

''(ii) threaten litigation if compensation is not paid, the infringement issue is not otherwise resolved, or the communication is not responded to; and

''(B) there is a pattern of false statements or threats described in subparagraph (A) having been made without litigation or other relief then having been pursued;

''(2) the assertions contained in the communications lack a reasonable basis in fact or law, because—

''(A) the person asserting the patent is not a person, or does not represent a person, with the current right to license the patent to, or to enforce the patent against, the intended recipients or any affiliated persons;

''(B) the communications seek compensation on account of activities undertaken after the patent has expired;

''(C) the communications seek compensation for a patent that has been held to be invalid or unenforceable in a final judicial or administrative proceeding that is unappealable or for which any opportunity for appeal is no longer available;

''(D) the communications seek compensation for activities by the recipient that the sender knows do not infringe the patent because such activities are authorized by the patentee;

''(E) the communications falsely represent that an investigation of the recipient's alleged infringement has occurred; or

''(F) the communications falsely state that litigation has been filed against, or a license has been paid by persons similarly situated to the recipient; or

''(3) the content of the written communications is likely to materially mislead a reasonable recipient because the content fails to include facts reasonably necessary to inform the recipient—

''(A) of the identity of the person asserting a right to license the patent to, or enforce the patent against, the intended recipient or any affiliated person;

''(B) of the patent issued by the United States Patent and Trademark Office alleged to have been infringed; and

''(C) if infringement or the need to pay compensation for a license is alleged, of an identification of at least one product, service, or other activity of the recipient that is alleged to infringe the identified patent or patents and, unless the information is not readily accessible, an explanation of the basis for such allegation.

''(c) ENFORCEMENT BY FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION.—

''(1) POWERS OF COMMISSION.—The Federal Trade Commission shall enforce this section in the same manner, by the same means, and with the same jurisdiction, powers, and duties as though all applicable terms and provisions of the Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C. 41 et seq.) were incorporated into and made a part of this section.

''(2) PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES.—Any person who engages in an act or practice described in subsection (b) shall be subject to the penalties and entitled to the privileges and immunities provided in the Federal Trade Commission Act (15 U.S.C. 41 et seq.).''.

(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 29 of title 35, United States Code, as amended by section 8, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 299C the following:

''299D. Bad-faith demand letters.''.

SEC. 10. TRANSPARENCY OF PATENT TRANSFER.

(a) PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE PROCEEDINGS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 26 of title 35, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 261 the following:

''§ 261A. Disclosure of information relating to patent ownership

''(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) PERIOD OF NONCOMPLIANCE.—The term 'period of noncompliance' refers to a period of time during which the assignee or the ultimate parent entity of an assignee of a patent has not been disclosed to the United States Patent and Trademark Office in accordance with this section.

''(2) ULTIMATE PATENT ENTITY.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the term 'ultimate parent entity' has the meaning given such term in section 801.1(a)(3) of title 16, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation.

''(B) MODIFICATION OF DEFINITION.—The Director may by regulation modify the definition of the term 'ultimate parent entity'.

''(b) REQUIREMENT TO DISCLOSE ASSIGNMENT.—An assignment of all substantial rights in an issued patent shall be recorded in the Patent and Trademark Office—

''(1) not later than the date on which the patent is issued; and

''(2) when any subsequent assignment is made that results in a change to the ultimate parent entity—

''(A) not later than 3 months after the date on which such assignment is made; or

''(B) in the case of an assignment made as part of a corporate acquisition that meets the reporting thresholds under section 7A(a)(2) of the Clayton Act (15 U.S.C. 18a(a)(2)), not later than 6 months after the closing date of such acquisition.

''(c) DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS.—A disclosure under subsection (b) shall include the name of the assignee and the ultimate parent entity of the assignee.

''(d) FAILURE TO COMPLY.—In a civil action in which a party asserts a claim for infringement of a patent, if there was a failure to comply with subsection (b) for the patent—

''(1) the party asserting infringement of the patent may not recover increased damages under section 284 or attorney fees under section 285 with respect to infringing activities taking place during any period of noncompliance, unless the denial of such damages or fees would be manifestly unjust; and

''(2) the court shall award to a prevailing accused infringer reasonable attorney fees and expenses incurred in discovering the identity of any undisclosed entity required to be disclosed under subsection (b), unless such sanctions would be manifestly unjust.''.

(2) APPLICABILITY.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall apply to any patent for which a notice of allowance is issued on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 26 of title 35, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''261A. Disclosure of information relating to patent ownership.''.

(b) REGULATIONS.—The Director may promulgate such regulations as are necessary to establish a registration fee in an amount sufficient to recover the estimated costs of administering section 261A of title 35, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), to facilitate the collection and maintenance of the information required by the amendments made by this section and section 3(b) of this Act, and to ensure the timely disclosure of such information to the public.

SEC. 11. PROTECTION OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LICENSES IN BANKRUPTCY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1522 of title 11, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(e) Section 365(n) shall apply to cases under this chapter. If the foreign representative rejects or repudiates a contract under which the debtor is a licensor of intellectual property, the licensee under such contract shall be entitled to make the election and exercise the rights described in section 365(n).''.

(b) TRADEMARKS.—

(1) AMENDMENT.—Section 101(35A) of title 11, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in subparagraph (E), by striking ''or'';

(B) in subparagraph (F), by adding ''or'' at the end; and

(C) by adding after subparagraph (F) the following new subparagraph:

''(G) a trademark, service mark, or trade name, as those terms are defined in section 45 of the Act of July 5, 1946 (commonly referred to as the 'Trademark Act of 1946' (15 U.S.C. 1127);''.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 365(n)(2) of title 11, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in subparagraph (B)—

(i) by striking ''royalty payments'' and inserting ''royalty or other payments''; and

(ii) by striking ''and'' after the semicolon;

(B) in subparagraph (C), by striking the period at the end of clause (ii) and inserting ''; and''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(D) in the case of a trademark, service mark, or trade name, the licensee shall not be relieved of any of its obligations to maintain the quality of the products and services

offered under or in connection with the licensed trademark, service mark or trade name, and the trustee shall retain the right to oversee and enforce quality control for said products and/or services.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act and shall apply to any case that is pending on, or for which a petition or complaint is filed on or after, such date of enactment.

SEC. 12. SMALL BUSINESS EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND INFORMATION ACCESS.

(a) SMALL BUSINESS EDUCATION AND OUTREACH.—

(1) RESOURCES FOR SMALL BUSINESS.—Using existing resources, the Director shall develop educational resources for small businesses to address concerns arising from patent infringement.

(2) SMALL BUSINESS PATENT OMBUDSMAN.—The existing small business patent outreach programs of the Office, in consultation with the relevant offices at the Small Business Administration and the Minority Business Development Agency, shall provide education and awareness regarding resources available for those persons responding to allegations of patent infringement.

(b) IMPROVING INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY FOR SMALL BUSINESS AND THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE USERS.—

(1) WEB SITE.—Using existing resources, the Director shall create a user-friendly section on the official Web site of the Office to notify the public when a patent case is brought in Federal court and, with respect to each patent at issue in such case, the Director shall include—

(A) information disclosed under section 261A of title 35, United States Code, as added by section 10, and section 281B(b) of title 35, United States Code, as added by section 3; and

(B) any other information the Director determines to be relevant.

(2) FORMAT.—In order to promote accessibility for the public, the information described in paragraph (1) shall be searchable by patent number, patent art area, and entity.

SEC. 13. STUDIES ON PATENT TRANSACTIONS, QUALITY, AND EXAMINATION.

(a) STUDY ON SECONDARY MARKET OVERSIGHT FOR PATENT TRANSACTIONS TO PROMOTE TRANSPARENCY AND ETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES.—

(1) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Director, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, the heads of other relevant agencies, and interested parties, shall, using existing resources of the Office, conduct a study—

(A) to develop legislative recommendations to ensure greater transparency and accountability in patent transactions occurring on the secondary market;

(B) to examine the economic impact that the patent secondary market has on the United States;

(C) to examine licensing and other oversight requirements that may be placed on the patent secondary market, including on the participants in such markets, to ensure that the market is a level playing field and that brokers in the market have the requisite expertise and adhere to ethical business practices; and

(D) to examine the requirements placed on other markets.

(2) REPORT ON STUDY.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director shall submit a report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate on the findings and recommendations of the Director from the study required under paragraph (1).

(b) STUDY ON PATENT SMALL CLAIMS PROCEDURES.—

(1) STUDY REQUIRED.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, in consultation with the Director of the Federal Judicial Center and the United States Patent and Trademark Office, shall, using existing resources, conduct a study to examine the idea of developing a pilot program for patent small claims procedures in certain judicial districts within the existing patent pilot program mandated by Public Law 111–349.

(B) CONTENTS OF STUDY.—The study under subparagraph (A) shall examine—

(i) the necessary criteria for using small claims procedures;

(ii) the costs that would be incurred for establishing, maintaining, and operating such a pilot program; and

(iii) the steps that would be taken to ensure that the procedures used in the pilot program are not misused for abusive patent litigation.

(2) REPORT ON STUDY.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts shall submit a report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate on the findings and recommendations of the Director of the Administrative Office from the study required under paragraph (1).

(c) STUDY ON BUSINESS METHOD PATENT QUALITY.—

(1) GAO STUDY.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall, using existing resources, conduct a study on the volume and nature of litigation involving business method patents.

(2) CONTENTS OF STUDY.—The study required under paragraph (1) shall focus on examining the quality of business method patents asserted in suits alleging patent infringement, and may include an examination of any other areas that the Comptroller General determines to be relevant.

(3) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate a report on the findings and recommendations from the study required by this subsection, including recommendations for any changes to laws or regulations that the Comptroller General considers appropriate on the basis of the study.

SEC. 14. TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS TO THE LEAHY-SMITH AMERICA INVENTS ACT AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS.

(a) Section 325(e)(2) of title 35, United States Code, is amended by striking ''or reasonably could have raised''.

(b) PTO PATENT REVIEWS.—

(1) CLARIFICATION.—

(A) SCOPE OF PRIOR ART.—Section 18(a)(1)(C)(i) of the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act (35 U.S.C. 321 note) is amended by striking ''section 102(a)'' and inserting ''subsection (a) or (e) of section 102''.

(B) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subparagraph (A) shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply to any proceeding pending on, or filed on or after, such date of enactment.

(2) AUTHORITY TO WAIVE FEE.—Subject to available resources, the Director may waive payment of a filing fee for a transitional proceeding described under section 18(a) of the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act (35 U.S.C. 321 note).

(c) TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.—

(1) NOVELTY.—

(A) AMENDMENT.—Section 102(b)(1)(A) of title 35, United States Code, is amended by striking ''the inventor or joint inventor or by another'' and inserting ''the inventor or a joint inventor or another''.

(B) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subparagraph (A) shall be effective as if included in the amendment made by section 3(b)(1) of the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act (Public Law 112–29).

(2) INVENTOR'S OATH OR DECLARATION.—

(A) REQUIREMENT TO EXECUTE.—Section 115(a) of title 35, United States Code, is amended in the second sentence by striking ''shall execute'' and inserting ''may be required by the Director to execute''.

(B) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subparagraph (A) shall be effective as if included in the amendment made by section 4(a)(1) of the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act (Public Law 112–29).

(3) ASSIGNEE FILERS.—

(A) BENEFIT OF EARLIER FILING DATE; RIGHT OF PRIORITY.—Section 119(e)(1) of title 35, United States Code, is amended, in the first sentence, by striking ''by an inventor or inventors named'' and inserting ''that names the inventor or a joint inventor''.

(B) BENEFIT OF EARLIER FILING DATE IN THE UNITED STATES.—Section 120 of title 35, United States Code, is amended, in the first sentence, by striking ''names an inventor or joint inventor'' and inserting ''names the inventor or a joint inventor''.

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this paragraph shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply to any patent application, and any patent issuing from such application, that is filed on or after September 16, 2012.

(4) DERIVED PATENTS.—

(A) AMENDMENT.—Section 291(b) of title 35, United States Code, is amended by striking ''or joint inventor'' and inserting ''or a joint inventor''.

(B) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subparagraph (A) shall be effective as if included in the amendment made by section 3(h)(1) of the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act (Public Law 112–29).

(5) SPECIFICATION.—Notwithstanding section 4(e) of the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act (Public Law 112–29; 125 Stat. 297), the amendments made by subsections (c) and (d) of section 4 of such Act shall apply to any proceeding or matter that is pending on, or filed on or after, the date of the enactment of this Act.

(6) TIME LIMIT FOR COMMENCING MISCONDUCT PROCEEDINGS.—

(A) AMENDMENT.—The fourth sentence of section 32 of title 35, United States Code, is amended by striking ''1 year'' and inserting ''18 months''.

(B) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this paragraph shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply to any action in which the Office files a complaint on or after such date of enactment.

(7) PATENT OWNER RESPONSE.—

(A) CONDUCT OF INTER PARTES REVIEW.—Paragraph (8) of section 316(a) of title 35, United States Code, is amended by striking ''the petition under section 313'' and inserting ''the petition under section 311''.

(B) CONDUCT OF POST-GRANT REVIEW.—Paragraph (8) of section 326(a) of title 35, United States Code, is amended by striking ''the petition under section 323'' and inserting ''the petition under section 321''.

(C) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this paragraph shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) MANAGEMENT OF THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 3(b)(1) of title 35, United States Code, is amended in the first sentence—

(A) by striking ''be vested with the authority to act in the capacity of the'' and inserting ''serve as Acting,''; and

(B) by inserting before the period ''or in the event of a vacancy in the office of the Director.''.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to appointments and vacancies occurring before, on, or after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 15. EFFECTIVE DATE.

Except as otherwise provided in this Act, the provisions of this Act shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act, and shall apply to any patent issued, or any action filed, on or after that date.

SEC. 16. SEVERABILITY.

If any provision of this Act, or an amendment made by this Act, or the application of such provision or amendment to any person or circumstance, is held to be invalid, the remainder of this Act, or an amendment made by this Act, or the application of such provision to other persons or circumstances, shall not be affected.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am proud to introduce legislation with Senators GRASSLEY, CORNYN, SCHUMER, LEE, HATCH and KLOBUCHAR. As members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, we have been working for almost 2 years to address abusive conduct in our patent system. Our legislation will deter abusive practices while preserving the strength of America's patent system. After months of negotiations, we have achieved a strong and fair balance that I strongly support.

America's patent system has fueled our Nation's greatest technological advances, creating jobs and spurring innovation. By promoting investment in new products and designs, our patent system drives developments that benefit us all. In recent years, however, bad actors have abused the patent system to extract money from unsuspecting companies through broad threats of patent litigation. Coffee shops have been threatened with patent suits simply for using a Wi-Fi router they purchased off the shelf, and website owners have faced costly litigation for using basic software in e-commerce. Instead of using patents to drive new creations, some entities are holding up main street businesses and innovative companies simply to extort financial settlements.

The PATENT Act addresses this behavior through several important reforms. It will promote transparency to hold bad actors accountable; curb misleading demand letters; and empower customers who have been improperly targeted for simply using a product when the product's manufacturer should defend the suit instead. I have heard about the urgent need for these measures from businesses in Vermont and across the country, which is why I included them in the bipartisan legislation on patent abuses that Senator LEE and I introduced last Congress. This provision has earned widespread support and I am glad it is part of the bill we introduce today.

The legislation also addresses imbalances in patent litigation that make it unusually difficult and expensive to defend against frivolous lawsuits. These measures would require detailed allegations in legal complaints for patent infringement, establish reasonable parameters for document discovery to save costs, and ensure that litigants can be held accountable for the other side's attorneys' fees if their conduct or position is found by a court to be objectively unreasonable.

Drafting legislation that involves the enforcement of patent rights is a complex problem that requires time and balance. Congress spent multiple years developing what ultimately became the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act of 2011, and we were able to come together to find common ground and enact that major piece of legislation into law. Throughout our negotiations on this bill, I have emphasized the need to address concerns from major manufacturers, inventors, universities, and patent law practitioners who warned that, if taken too far, patent litigation reform proposals would harm legitimate patent holders' ability to protect their rights in court. The legislation we have introduced today is greatly improved as a result of their input.

It is worth highlighting some of the changes that have been made to the bill to respond to those concerns, changes which were personally important to me as we negotiated this legislation. The language in the PATENT Act provides for fee shifting only in cases where the court finds that the losing party was not ''objectively reasonable.'' This is an important change from the approach of ''presumptive loser pays'' contained in the House's patent reform bill, the Innovation Act. It promotes judicial discretion and ensures the burden is on the party seeking fees to show that fees should be awarded. An additional exception allows the court to refrain from awarding fees if such an award would be unjust—for example, because it would cause undue financial harm to an individual inventor or a public institution of higher education.

The PATENT Act simplifies the pleading requirements that are contained in the Innovation Act, and ensures that a plaintiff is not required to plead information if it is not accessible to them. I am grateful that the other authors of this bill worked with me to ensure that the standard of what a plaintiff is required to plead about infringement of their patent claims tracks Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, without creating a higher standard for plaintiffs to prove a plausible claim for relief.

I am also grateful for the significant work that was done to streamline the discovery provisions of the bill, to protect litigants from costly discovery while ensuring that legitimate plaintiffs are not prejudiced by unreasonable limitations on their ability to access information. Under the PATENT Act, discovery is stayed while the court resolves early, pre-answer motions about whether the case has been brought in the correct venue, against the correct defendants, and whether the complaint states a plausible claim for relief. Discovery is permitted if necessary to resolve those motions, to resolve a motion for preliminary relief, or if failure to allow discovery would cause specific prejudice to a party.

Taken together, these provisions will help promote efficiency in patent suits while ensuring that patent holders can fairly protect their rights in court. While the provisions are not perfect, they strike a meaningful balance that I am happy to support given the unusual complexities of patent litigation.

As this legislation proceeds to markup in the Senate Judiciary Committee next month, I look forward to considering additional amendments that will improve this bill. For example, in recent months, some companies and inventors have raised concerns about unfair practices that are taking place in the post-grant review proceedings through which patents can be challenged at the Patent and Trademark Office. Those proceedings were created by the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act as an important tool to improve patent quality, but if they are being misused or creating inaccurate perceptions in the marketplace, we should address those concerns. I look forward to working with the stakeholders who have already contributed meaningfully to this bill.

Abusive practices by bad actors are a discredit to our strong patent system, and it is in no one's interest that they continue. Businesses, innovators and customers that are victims of abusive conduct need us to come together to enact reform. I look forward to this bill's swift consideration in the Judiciary Committee.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 154—DESIGNATING MAY 16, 2015, AS ''KIDS TO PARKS DAY''

Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. HIRONO, and Mr. HEINRICH) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 154

Whereas the 5th annual Kids to Parks Day will be celebrated on May 16, 2015;

Whereas the goal of Kids to Parks Day is to promote healthy outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship, empower young people, and encourage families to get outdoors and visit the parks and public land of the United States;

Whereas on Kids to Parks Day, individuals from rural and urban areas of the United States can be reintroduced to the splendid national, State, and neighborhood parks located in their communities;

Whereas communities across the United States offer a variety of natural resources and public land, often with free access, to individuals seeking outdoor recreation;

Whereas the people of the United States, young and old, should be encouraged to lead more healthy and active lifestyles;

Whereas Kids to Parks Day is an opportunity for families to take a break from their busy lives and come together for a day of active, wholesome fun; and

Whereas Kids to Parks Day will broaden an appreciation for nature and the outdoors in young people: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates May 16, 2015, as ''Kids to Parks Day;''

(2) recognizes the importance of outdoor recreation and the preservation of open spaces to the health and education of the young people of the United States;

(3) encourages the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities; and

(4) encourages the President to issue a proclamation for Kids to Parks Day, calling on the people of the United States to observe Kids to Parks Day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 155—ESTABLISHING MAY 2, 2015, AS A DAY OF RECOGNITION FOR EBOLA ORPHANS TO EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AFFECTED BY THE 2014 EBOLA OUTBREAK IN WEST AFRICA BY PROMOTING AWARENESS OF THE CHILDREN OF WEST AFRICA WHO HAVE BEEN ORPHANED BY THE 2014 EBOLA EPIDEMIC, CELEBRATING THOSE WHO HAVE RECOGNIZED AND ARE WORKING TO FULFILL THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN, AND ENCOURAGING THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE PEOPLE OF WEST AFRICA

Mr. INHOFE (for himself and Ms. KLOBUCHAR) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 155

Whereas the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa reached epidemic proportions;

Whereas the World Health Organization reports that there have been over 14,800 laboratory-confirmed cases of Ebola in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone as of April 19, 2015;

Whereas the World Health Organization reports that there have been over 10,800 deaths from Ebola in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone as of April 19, 2015;

Whereas the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that as of February 2015, nearly 11,000 children in West Africa have lost 1 or both parents due to the 2014 Ebola outbreak;

Whereas some families reject Ebola orphans out of fear of the disease;

Whereas the United States authorized $750,000,000 to support up to 3,000 United States troops in Monrovia, Liberia to respond to the Ebola crisis; and

Whereas United States citizens have given time and resources to assist the people of West Africa, including Ebola orphans: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes May 2, 2015, as a Day of Recognition for Ebola Orphans, to promote awareness of the children of West Africa orphaned by the 2014 Ebola outbreak;

(2) supports the goals and work of those who are addressing the developing Ebola orphan crisis in West Africa; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States to consider the needs of the children of West Africa who were orphaned by the 2014 Ebola epidemic.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 1194. Mr. RISCH (for himself and Mr. RUBIO) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1179 proposed by Mr. CORKER (for himself and Mr. CARDIN) to the amendment SA 1140 proposed by Mr. CORKER (for himself and Mr. CARDIN) to the bill H.R. 1191, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 1195. Ms. AYOTTE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1191, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 1194. Mr. RISCH (for himself and Mr. RUBIO) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 1179 proposed by Mr. CORKER (for himself and Mr. CARDIN) to the amendment SA 1140 proposed by Mr. CORKER (for himself and Mr. CARDIN) to the bill H.R. 1191, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 1, line 3, of the amendment, insert after '', and annexes'' the following: '', and a certification that the Government of Iran has released to the United States—

(i) Saeed Abedini of Idaho, who has been detained in Iran on charges related to his religious beliefs since September 2012;

(ii) Amir Hekmati of Michigan, who has been imprisoned in Iran on false espionage charges since August 2011;

(iii) Jason Rezaian of California, who, as an Iranian government credentialed reporter for the Washington Post, has been unjustly held in Iran on vague charges since July 2014; and

(iv) Robert Levinson of Florida, who was abducted on Kish Island in March 2007;

SA 1195. Ms. AYOTTE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1191, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 28, strike line 1 and insert the following:

''(h) SENSE OF CONGRESS ON INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILE PROGRAM.—

''(1) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

''(A) The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to advance its intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) program.

''(B) On February 2, 2015, the Islamic Republic of Iran successfully launched its Safir long-range missile system to send a satellite into orbit.

''(C) In 2013, the National Air and Space Intelligence Center concluded that Iran could use space launch technology as a 'test bed' for ICBM technology development, stating, 'Iran could develop and test an ICBM capable of reaching the United States by 2015. Since 2008, Iran has conducted multiple successful launches of the two-stage Safir space launch vehicle (SLV) and has also revealed the larger two-stage Simorgh SLV, which could serve as a test bed for developing ICBM technologies.'.

''(D) On January 29, 2014, the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, testified, 'We judge that Iran would choose a ballistic missile as its preferred method of delivering nuclear weapons. . .'.

''(E) Iran continues to violate United Nations Security Council resolution 1929 (2010) by developing ICBM capabilities that could deliver a nuclear weapon.

''(2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—Congress—

''(A) remains concerned about the threat posed by Iran's ballistic missile development program to the security of the United States and its allies; and

''(B) calls on the President to urge the Government of Iran to comply with United Nations Security Council resolution 1929 regarding their intercontinental ballistic missile program.

''(i) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 29, 2015, at 9:30 a.m., in room SR–253 of the Russell Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled ''Five Years After Deepwater Horizon: Improvements and Challenges in Prevention and Response.''

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

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 29, 2015.

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 29, 2015, at 9:35 a.m., in room SD–215 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 29, 2015, at 9 a.m. to conduct a

hearing entitled ''The Homeland Security Department's Budget Submission for Fiscal Year 2016.''

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

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 29, 2015, in room SD–628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, at 2:30 p.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 29, 2015 at 9:30 a.m., in room 428A of the Russell Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''King vs. Burwell Supreme Court Case and Congressional Action that can be taken to Protect Small Businesses and their Employees.''

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

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 29, 2015, at 2:30 p.m., in room SR–418 of the Russell Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''GAO's High Risk List and the Veterans Health Administration.''

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 29, 2015, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''Exploring Opportunities for Private Investment in Public Infrastructure.''

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 29, 2015, at 2:30 p.m.

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator LEAHY, I ask unanimous consent that Aaron Locke, an intern on his personal office staff, be granted Senate floor privileges for Thursday, April 30, 2015.

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

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Thursday, April 30; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; and that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of H.R. 1191.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator BROWN.

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

The Senator from Ohio.

FDA TOBACCO DEEMING REGULATIONS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, it has been more than a year since the Food and Drug Administration issued its proposed tobacco deeming regulations. These regulations would give the Agency the same regulatory authority it currently has over traditional tobacco cigarettes to other unrelated tobacco products such as e-cigarettes and hookahs.

These regulations are critical for public health, especially for children. Yet, they have languished within the administration for more than a year. A year is too long to wait because we know what has been happening.

According to a report from the Centers for Disease Control—the FDA's own Center for Tobacco Products—in the past year, e-cigarette use has tripled among teens. Absent any regulation, more and more of these potentially dangerous products have found a way into the hands of our children.

After just a few years on the market, children's use of e-cigarettes has now surpassed the use of traditional cigarettes. Think back to the first time we heard about e-cigarettes. I didn't know what people were talking about. Now we see there are more children using e-cigarettes than traditional cigarettes. This is in large part because we have failed to regulate these addictive products.

Until these regulations are finalized, e-cigarette companies will be able to freely advertise their products to our children in Juneau and to our children in Cleveland.

What many people fail to realize is that often e-cigarette companies and big tobacco companies are now one and the same. Marlboro-maker Altria Group, the Nation's largest tobacco company, is making up for its loss in revenue as cigarette smoking has declined—and it is doing so among children too—making up its loss of revenue from combustible tobacco products by marketing its MarkTen electronic cigarette. Lorillard has acquired Blu e-cigarettes. Reynolds American, the maker of Camel and Pall Mall cigarettes, has a new e-cigarette called VUSE.

Much of Big Tobacco's behavior is driven by one giant and irrefutable fact: Tobacco in the United States kills 400,000 people a year. Think about that—400,000 Americans die prematurely from tobacco use every year. What does that mean? That means tobacco companies need to find 400,000 new customers a year. They are not going to market to people such as the Presiding Officer or me or the people staffing the Senate floor. They are going to people like the pages. They are going to people 16 and 17 years old to addict them to cigarettes. People my age rarely start smoking; people their age so often do.

Big Tobacco has to find these new customers. It used to be that they preyed on children with highly paid, sophisticated tobacco executives who spend their days figuring out how to entice teens to start smoking with characters such as Joe Camel. We think of Camel No. 5, some of the things they did. Now that they are no longer allowed to advertise traditional tobacco products to kids—and parenthetically, that is one of the great public health victories in this country, what this body did, what the House of Representatives did, what Presidents did to alert public health and to change young people's behavior so young people did not start smoking in larger numbers. That was an effort by government and consumer groups and children's groups.

These tobacco companies now, though, are taking advantage of the new, unregulated world of e-cigarettes to advertise their products directly to children because they can. Joe Camel has been replaced by celebrities smoking e-cigarettes. These companies sponsor youth-oriented events and air ads on TV and radio aimed at teenagers. They are using new advertising platforms on social media to get to kids where parents typically are not looking.

The shameful e-cigarette marketing tactics employed by tobacco companies are encouraging this next new generation to use tobacco, and, as the CDC's study shows, their tactics are working—triple the use, triple the number of young people smoking these e-cigarettes.

Another recent study revealed that teens were able to purchase e-cigarettes online in 94 percent of the attempts they made. None of them were required to show proof of their age when the cigarettes were delivered.

A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine that examined the use of candy flavors in tobacco products found that—no surprise here—flavors drive increases in tobacco use among kids. E-cigarettes and their refill liquids come in thousands of different flavors, such as Gummi Bears, Sweet Tarts, and Fruit Loops. Just look at this photo of Gummi Bear-flavored e-liquid. The bottle is about this big.

As the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. James Perrin, said, ''Because liquid nicotine comes in a variety of bright colors and in flavors appealing to children such as cotton candy and gummy bear, it is no surprise that these products have found their way into the hands of children.''

I don't think they are making gummy bears to encourage people the age of the Presiding Officer, to get them to start smoking, or my age; they are getting young children to start smoking. Gummi Bears, Fruit Loops, and Sweet Tarts—those are candies young children receive at Halloween. They are also flavors of highly toxic products.

The bottle in this photo contains two teaspoons of liquid nicotine. A single teaspoon of this e-liquid, even if it is highly diluted, can kill a small child if ingested. It is totally legal. People will see this sold at drugstores and at all kinds of places. Children are likely to pick it up if they see it around the house. There is a chance—there always is in a country of 300 million people—that some child will—attracted by this, looking at this, the cute little bottle—will drink it, and that child could die.

It is past time for the FDA to regulate these dangerous products before more children and more teenagers get hooked on e-cigarettes.

My colleagues and I, led by Senator MERKLEY, Senator BLUMENTHAL, Senator DURBIN, and others, have called on the FDA over and over again to finalize these proposed rules and reject efforts to weaken these proposed regulations. Every day the FDA waits is thousands more children getting addicted to nicotine, thousands more children getting exposed potentially to drinking this very toxic liquid, and thousands more children smoking these e-cigarettes.

Tobacco companies are pushing to allow more products to be grandfathered out of the new rules. They want to exempt a huge range of e-cigarettes from any review to determine whether they are a threat to public health. That would mean these products would never be subject to review by the FDA. How stupid of a nation can we be? We have been so successful in the last 40 years as public health officials, as Members of Congress, as responsible adults, as consumer groups and advocates for children. We have been so successful in reducing the incidence of smoking, especially among young people. It has changed the whole next generation. Yet, now we are letting this happen.

E-cigarettes are still tobacco products. They are used by the tobacco industry—I haven't talked about this yet—as a gateway cigarette for kids, and that doesn't stop. They see this, and they start smoking these e-cigarettes. Then a year or 2 years, 5 years, 10 years down the road, they will be smoking traditional tobacco and they will be addicted, and we know what addiction to cigarettes is for so many of our fellow Americans.

My colleagues and I urge the Food and Drug Administration to strengthen and finalize these regulations before any more of our children get hooked on potentially dangerous and addictive tobacco products.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, April 30, 2015.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:23 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, April 30, 2015, at 9:30 a.m.