The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, our God, we honor Your Name. You continue to guide our Nation, and we trust the unfolding of Your prevailing providence. Help us to effectively tell this generation about Your mighty works so that Your Name will be known by those not yet born. Use us to inspire people to celebrate Your matchless mercy and Your power to save. Thank You for keeping Your word, for extending to us Your daily blessings, and for picking us up each time we fall.

Guide your Senators with Your love today. Be for them a shade by day and a defense by night. Lord, keep them on the road that leads to life.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 9, 2016.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, to perform the duties of the Chair.

OREN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PAUL thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate will soon have a chance to come together in support of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, a bill designed to help address the prescription opioid and heroin epidemic that is spreading across our country.

We have seen the impact this crisis is having in all 50 States, how it is affecting people of all different ages and backgrounds. We know that heroin and prescription opioid addiction devastates communities, destroys families, and claims thousands of lives each year, but we also know there are steps we can take here in the Senate that can help heal our Nation. For instance, just a few months ago we appropriated $400 million to opioid-specific programs—which is nearly one-third more than what the Senate appropriated the preceding year—and all $400 million of those funds remain available to be spent today.

We can take another step forward now—a big step—with the passage of this authorization bill. Just listen to what some officials are saying about CARA’s potential impact: Northern Kentucky’s top anti-drug official said this bill can help “allow individuals, families, and communities to heal from this scourge.” The president and CEO of a nonprofit organization with programs in Kentucky noted that CARA can “create lasting impact in Kentucky” and ultimately help lead to more Kentuckians “receive[ing] the treatment they desperately need. A group that provides overdose prevention training in the Commonwealth said that CARA can give them a “stronger foundation to move from training to action.” President Obama’s own drug czar noted that provisions like those in CARA are “critically important to make headway” in this epidemic.

The bill before us, with all of its important provisions, is the result of hard work and leadership from many colleagues on both sides of the aisle. Of course, there is the lead Republican sponsor of this bill, the junior Senator from Ohio, Mr. PORTMAN, who has worked closely with colleagues in both parties, such as the junior Senator from New Hampshire, Ms. AYOTTE, as...
well as the junior Senator from Rhode Island and the senior Senator from Minnesota. There is the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator Grassley, who worked to move this bill quickly out of committee by voice vote.

I also thank the many Senators who worked with the bill managers to process the kinds of amendments both sides agreed would make this bill even better. That includes the senior Senators from Iowa and California, whose amendment would aid in targeting illegal drug importation. It includes the senior Senator from West Virginia, whose amendment will build upon education and awareness efforts in an effort to underline the dangers of opioid abuse. It includes the junior Senator from Pennsylvania, whose amendment would allow Medicare Advantage and Part D plans to implement a prescription drug abuse prevention tool, a tool similar to what is already available and used in Kentucky in the Medicaid Program and in private plans.

The bipartisan collaboration we have seen thus far shows what we can achieve on behalf of the American people when we work together toward important shared priorities. The passage of CARES would bring us one step closer to ending prescription opioid and heroin addiction and overdose, so let’s keep working together to pass it.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Republican leader and I have worked together in leadership capacities in the Senate for almost 20 years. He has been the whip and I was the whip. I was majority leader, he was minority leader, and vice versa. My presentations the last few weeks do not take away from the fact that Mitch McConnell and I are friends. We have worked together for a long time, and we have done our best to move the Senate forward. But that does not take away from my need as a Senator to pronounce publicly when I and I disagree. So I want to make sure the record is reflective of that.

As each day passes, the Republican leader continues to transform his caucus into the party of Donald Trump. That is not good. You can see it in the Republicans’ rhetoric. The Senators are using increasingly extreme and disturbing language in defending their unprecedented obstruction of President Obama’s Supreme Court nominee, who yet is unnamed.

The assistant Republican leader said the President’s eventual nominee “will bear some resemblance to a pinata.” We talked about, in the past, what a pinata is. He is comparing a Supreme Court nominee to a children’s party favor that gets smashed repeatedly with a baseball bat or something similar to a baseball bat. That is nothing more than a thinly veiled threat from Senator McConnell on the coming assault on the President’s nominee.

We should not forget that we don’t know who this nominee will be. We don’t even know whether it is a man or a woman, educated at Harvard or Stanford or the University of Utah or the University of New Mexico. We don’t know. But the Republican leader doesn’t care who the eventual nominee is. It applies to all. He doesn’t want his Senators to care either. All he cares about is appeasing the Trump wing of the party— which is getting pretty big—and Trump’s radical followers.

After all, this is the same Republican leader who yesterday again refused to distance himself from Donald Trump. He refused to condemn his hateful campaign for President. Instead, he pledged to support Trump’s nominees. It is really shocking to see this transformation. Republicans have not always been this irrational and vicious.

Even Senator CORZINE used to know better. During Justice Alito’s confirmation hearings, the then-junior Senator from Texas was also talking about pinatas as he decried personal attacks on Supreme Court nominees. Here is what he said:

I’m happy Justice Alito survived these unwarranted attacks. I’m sorry that his family had to be subjected to them, as well. At some point, however, we as a committee will need to come to terms with our confirmation process. The current regime treats Supreme Court nominees more like pinatas than human beings. And it’s something none of us should be willing to tolerate.

The Republican whip gave this pinata talk the day the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the Alito nomination. Now that President Obama is the President of the Supreme Court, it seems the assistant Republican leader is willing to tolerate, even promote, these “unwarranted attacks” he once denounced. Why the change? The answer is very simple: The senior Senator from Texas, like every other member of his caucus, is simply obeying the Republican leader’s orders as he leads them to become the party of Trump, the caucus of Trump, the conference of Trump. This is the path the Republican leader chose for his party—a path of demagoguery and lapsed constitutional duties, a path which he forged and which led to the rise of Donald Trump. I do not understand why so many of my Republican colleagues blindfoldedly following this path down a very bumpy road. Where are the moderate Republicans—however few there may be—who see that they are being used by the Republican leader to appease the Trump wing of the party by keeping their eyes blindly following reason from within the Republican caucus who will take a stand against this unprecedented dereliction of duty?

Keep in mind, a decade ago the Senator from Texas was decrying a Republican nominee being treated like a pinata. Now, fast-forward 10 years, and he is saying: I am going to make a pinata out of whoever it is, even though the Republican leader doesn’t know who it will be.

I know there have to be some moderate Republicans, or Republicans, because outside of this building, there are Republicans urging their colleagues to forgo this ludicrous obstruction.

A person I enjoyed working with right here, a very close friend of the Senator from Mississippi, Trent Lott, was the majority leader, and I worked with him very closely. He was a conservative, I repeat, but he was very pragmatic. Yesterday or the day before, he lamented his party’s handling of the Supreme Court vacancy. Here is what he said:

I probably would’ve handled it differently. My attitude, particularly on the Supreme Court, was that elections do have consequences. Sometimes I think the Republican leader does, too. I failed toward being supportive of the president’s nominees, Democrat or Republican.

That is how we should do things around here. It was the standard that a President put forward a nominee and that person did not have some ethical problems and was basically qualified, we would take care of that. There is no better example of that than Clarence Thomas. I didn’t vote for Clarence Thomas. I wish he had gotten enough votes. But we did not stop that matter from going forward. He just barely made it. He got 52 votes. But there was no filibuster. He was nominated by a Republican President. The President liked him. On paper, he was qualified. He was a graduate of Yale Law School. But that isn’t how they are doing things around here anymore.

What Trent Lott said—he is not alone. Former Republican Senator from Indiana—someone we all liked a lot—Dick Lugar is now urging Republican leaders to do the right thing and honor their constitutional duty. Here is what he said:

I can understand their reluctance given the controversy that surrounds all of the debate that has already occurred. But that is not sufficient reason to forgo your duty.

What Richard Lugar is saying is: Do your jobs. You have a constitutional obligation to do that.

Those are two quotes I just gave from strong Republican leaders telling Senate Republicans to do their jobs. So why won’t they? Of the six nominations made to vacancies that have existed during Presidential election years since 1900—more than 100 years ago—each of the six has been confirmed by the Senate. That is what the Senate has done in the past and should do now.

I say to my friends across the aisle: Listen to reason. Need your constitutional duties. Listen to what the American people are saying. They are not taking the popular stand. It is wrong. Don’t fall on your sword for Donald Trump and his kind. Don’t sacrifice your integrity as a Senator. Stand up
and do the right thing. Promise to give President Obama’s nominee a meeting, a hearing, and a vote. That is your job, so do it.

Mr. President, I see no one on the floor. I ask that the business of the day be announced.

**RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME**

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

**MORNING BUSINESS**

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, equally divided, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority controlling the first half and the Democrats controlling the second half.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

**FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY**

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, there is a vacancy on the Supreme Court, and this Chamber and the American people must fully understand what is at stake in choosing the person to fill that vacancy. For a generation, Justice Scalia was the conservative heart of the Supreme Court. Whoever takes his seat will not replace him because there is no replacement, but his passing has the potential to dramatically shift the delicate balance of the Court. Should Justice Scalia be replaced by a philosophically liberal Justice, the implications for the rights of Americans and the direction of our Nation would be profound.

A liberal Justice may mean that the individual right to keep and bear arms will be nullified and laws that deprive Americans of the means to protect themselves and their families will proliferate. A liberal Justice may mean that the President’s extraconstitutional Executive order to grant amnesty to illegal immigrants will be upheld, trampling the separation of powers and the will of the American people. A liberal Justice may mean that the President’s plan to destroy America’s coal industry will survive, destroying thousands of jobs and steady income for American families.

A liberal Justice may mean that the government will be empowered to force people of faith to violate their deeply held beliefs to subsidize abortifacients they abhor, and these are only the issues we can foresee. Novel issues that strike at the core of our constitutional order will continue to arise and how they are settled will hinge greatly on the next Justice. What depends on who the next Justice is, we cannot rush into this decision. Because the law may take such a dramatic turn, the Members of this Chamber must first get the input of the American people to determine what the direction of our country should be, and because the next Justice will guide American law for the next generation, the Senate should not subordinate our constitutional responsibility to advise and consent on a Supreme Court nominee to a lameduck President with a stale mandate.

This is the way forward that the majority leader and Chairman GRASSLEY have charted, and it is the right one. After all, we have an election in November. In a few short months, we will have a new President and new Senators who can consider the next Justice with the full faith of the American people.

Why would we cut off the national debate about the next Justice? Why would we squelch the voice of the people? Why would we deny the voters a chance to weigh in on the makeup of the Supreme Court? There is absolutely no reason to do so or at least no principled reason to do so. That is why no Congress in our history has confirmed a Supreme Court nominee of a lame-duck President with a stale mandate.

Abiding by this practice this year is even more pressing. Some of my Democratic colleagues argue that the American people have already weighed in on the Supreme Court by reelecting President Obama in 2012, but I will remind those who make this argument that the Constitution requires two institutions, the President and the Senate, to agree upon a new Justice, and in 2014 the voters overwhelmingly chose to send Republicans to the Senate, making clear their dissatisfaction with this President’s cavalier attitude toward the Constitution and his duty to execute the laws as written. If the 2014 election meant anything, it meant that Americans do not want this President to determine alone the course of American law for a generation in the Supreme Court.

In the coming months, there is much work for Congress to do. We must pass a bill to fund and rebuild our military. In light of what you might call the diversity of the minority leader’s views over time, I think it is understandable that questions have been raised about the sincerity of his position. In the quiet moments following the rambling jeremiads that the minority leader directs at Republicans on the Senate floor, I think my colleagues might be forgiven if they entertain the thought that the principled ground on which he chose to stand is slightly less firm than before.

In the coming months, there is much work for Congress to do. We must pass a bill to fund and rebuild our military. In terms of dignity and public esteem such as he had, that ill-considered move cost the minority leader dearly. He could only exercise the nuclear option if he flip-flopped on his prior vehement opposition to it. In 2005, the minority leader stood steadfastly against the nuclear option when it served his political interests. He called the nuclear option wrong, illegal, and even un-American. He was—to adopt a familiar saying—against the nuclear option before he was for it.

In the current debate over filling Justice Scalia’s seat, why does the minority leader perform a similarly brazen flip-flop, not that we should be surprised by that. Today the minority leader claimed that the Constitution compels the Senate to immediately take up any nominee President Obama sends our way, but 10 years ago, again, he sang a much different tune. The minority leader came to this very same floor to speak passionately in defense of the constitutional prerogative of the Senate to defer a vote on the President’s Supreme Court pick. He forcefully stated that nowhere in the Constitution does it say the Senate has a duty to give Presidential nominees an up-or-down vote. It says appointments shall be made with the advice and consent of the Senate, and that is very different than saying that every nominee receives a vote.

What has changed in the 10 years since the minority leader uttered those words? Well, of course, merely the politics of the situation.

I ask: if the current President were a Republican, would the minority leader be taking the position he is today?

If the current President were not a fellow Democrat, would the minority leader still be inclined to trash the constitutional prerogatives of the Senate and abandon its longstanding customs?

In light of what you might call the diversity of the minority leader’s views over time, I think it is understandable that questions have been raised about the sincerity of his position. In the quiet moments following the rambling jeremiads that the minority leader directs at Republicans on the Senate floor, I think my colleagues might be forgiven if they entertain the thought that the principled ground on which he chose to stand is slightly less firm than before.
We must continue to improve the conditions for wage growth and the creation of new jobs. We must conduct stringent oversight to rein in the excesses of the President on a quixotic pursuit of a legacy, but with regard to a Supreme Court nomination, the only task for this Senate is to wait passionately and listen to the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The Acting President pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, over the last 20 years we have seen incredible advancements in computing, telecommunications, and information technology. The United States has led the world in innovation thanks to our brilliant entrepreneurs, scientists, world-class universities, massive private sector capital investment, a culture that rewards risk-taking, and a favorable regulatory environment, but increases in innovation are threatened as American businesses are forced to contend with an ever-growing number of outdated laws and regulations. While our businesses have often managed to succeed anyway, American industries deserve better from our government.

Congress has a responsibility to ensure that our statutes and regulations are appropriately and narrowly tailored for today's economy and for the future. My Commerce Committee colleagues and I have been eager to do our part in ensuring our Nation's communications laws keep pace with innovation. Last week, we unanimously passed the bipartisan MOBILE NOW Act, which I introduced, along with the committee's ranking member Senator Bill Nelson. This legislation will give a boost to American innovators who are looking to make the next generation of wireless technology, known as 5G, a reality.

Mr. President, 5G wireless will obviously mean things like faster movie downloads and more advanced smartphones, and it will also mean massive leaps forward in areas like technology, entertainment, public safety, and health care, as well as other economic benefits that will make American lives better.

One of the best examples I have heard came from former FCC Commissioner Meredith Atwell Baker. She pointed out that right now a Smart Car with 4G wireless technology takes 4½ feet to brake in response to an obstacle. By contrast, a Smart car with 5G technology would travel only 1 inch before braking, which could be the difference between life and death. In order to make 5G wireless technology a reality, we have to put the right policies in place. Policies that maximize the efficiency of the spectrum wireless, superhigh frequency spectrum for wireless broadband. For technical reasons, that spectrum has seen limited use to date, but as new technologies come online in the next few years, this spectrum will become increasingly viable.

Indeed, many believe that these superhigh bands will become critical for our 5G future. Making spectrum available is important, but freeing up spectrum does not help our digital economy unless and until we put it to good use. This is why several of MOBILE NOW's provisions focus on speeding up the deployment of the communications facilities at the heart of our Nation's broadband networks. One way to do that is by putting a shot clock on Federal agencies to force them to make speedy decisions on companies' applications to place wireless facilities on Federal property. This is critical for rural States like South Dakota and Nevada where placing wireless facilities on Federal lands would bring more high-speed Internet service to underserved communities.

The MOBILE NOW Act is an example of what is possible when Members put aside their partisan differences and work together to come up with commonsense proposals to spur economic growth. In addition to the provisions Senator Nelson and I wrote, MOBILE NOW also includes all or part of six other bills which represent the work of Senators Booker, Schmersal, Gardner, Klobuchar, Manchin, Moran, Rubio, Schatz, and Udall. We also adopted important amendments from Senators Heller and Peters. Even the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee—Senator Inhofe, as well as a longtime former member of the Commerce Committee, Senator Boxer—made key contributions to the bill's "dig once" section.

The MOBILE NOW Act would not have been possible without the collaboration of these Senators. So it is my hope that this spirit of bipartisanship will also carry over to the Commerce Committee's efforts to reauthorize the Federal Communications Commission. Compared to other Federal agencies, the FCC is relatively small. But as the regulator of the communications and technology industries, both of which are critical to America's manufacturing economy, the Commission has significant influence over the direction of our country.

Given the importance of the FCC, my colleagues might be surprised to learn that Congress has not reauthorized it in more than a quarter of a century. You have to go back to 1990 to find the last time that the FCC, or the Federal Communications Commission, was reauthorized. The work of the FCC has continued during that period, of course, but reauthorizing this agency every 2 years ensures that Congress will be able to make sure that the FCC has all the tools it needs to keep up with our rapidly changing digital landscape. Some 26 years ago—I think it is safe to say—none of us in this Chamber knew anything about the Web, let alone about smartphones or streaming videos. Yet when we wrote then the FCC's mandates landscape has been fundamentally transformed by digital technology, mobile services, and the Internet. Yet the FCC in that entire time has gone unauthorized, making it the oldest expired authorization in the Commerce Committee's broad jurisdiction. I hope we can change that.

On Monday I introduced the FCC Reauthorization Act of 2016, which includes a handful of noncontroversial, good-government reforms to go with a 2-year reauthorization window. By re-starting the FCC's regular authorization cycle, the bill will ensure that necessary congressional oversight of the FCC's budget and procedures occur routinely.

As indicated by the FCC Commissioners themselves at our oversight hearing last week, a consistent legislative reauthorization process will produce a more productive and more productive relationship between Congress and the Commission. This will result in better outcomes for both consumers and the rapidly growing broadband-based economy.

Telecom policy was once considered to be one of the least partisan issues in Congress. While the campaign for net neutrality has certainly changed the political playing field over the last decade, I believe there is still a lot of room for bipartisanship on tech and telecommunications issues. The MOBILE NOW Act and the FCC Reauthorization Act are two bills that can make a real difference. I look forward to working with colleagues on the Commerce Committee and in the full Senate to pass both of these bills in the coming months.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, today the Senate is taking a second step to deal with a public health crisis that is destroying lives and damaging communities across the Nation, the epidemic of opioid and heroin abuse. Step 1 last year was to reduce spending in other programs and increase the dollars available to deal with this addiction.

An estimated 1.9 million American adults have an opioid-use addiction or disorder related to prescription drug pain relievers. Another 500,860 have an opioid-use disorder related to heroin. Some 2.5 million Americans are dealing with this problem. Our Nation’s veterans are particularly at risk for developing an addiction to opioids. A study published in 2014 found a high prevalence of chronic pain among veterans because of their service. The chronic pain among veterans was 44 percent compared to 26 percent in the general public.

There was a higher prevalence of opioid use, at 15.1 percent, in the U.S. military after a combat deployment, after possible injuries in training or injuries from an IED attack, compared to just 4 percent in the general public. In 2014, 1,000 Missourians died from an opioid overdose. In St. Louis alone, deaths related to opioid abuse have increased nearly three times since 2007.

Member after member has come to the floor, just as they came to me last year as the chairman of the funding committee for health and human services and explained what a problem this is in their State. The majority leader made a point to me the other day that in Kentucky more people died last year from drug overdoses than died from car accidents.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 4 people every day die from an overdose of opioid pain relievers, and 78 people die every day from a combination of pain reliever overdoses or heroin overdose.

Many times those prescription opioids have been the pathway to heroin. Deaths from prescription opioids have quadrupled in the past 14 years. These are stunning statistics. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has rightly labeled this an “epidemic.” This should get a good vote on the Senate floor today or tomorrow. But just because it gets a good vote, it does not mean it was not an important debate to have.

Just because it gets a good vote and is now better funded than it has been in the past, that does not mean the Senate and the House don’t need to weigh in and say: Here is more specific ability to deal with these problems in new ways. The good news is that addiction is a treatable disease. Those who receive treatment can recover and go on to lead full, healthy, and productive lives.

In Missouri 72 percent of the individuals who had gone through our State’s opioid treatment program in random tests told us that they with addiction is that only about 10 percent of individuals who are battling drug addiction receive treatment. That is why I am proud to be a cosponsor of this bill. That is why it is important that we commit ourselves to win the fight against addiction.

We need to make sure that all of the stakeholders are involved. As to first responders, if you are a first responder attached to a fire department, for instance, the odds are that you are going to respond to three times as many drug overdoses as you do to fires. So whether it is first responders, paramedics, or the law enforcement community, we need to use all of our resources to try to be sure that we are doing what needs to be done here.

The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act that we are debating provides grants from multiple government agencies to encourage State and local communities to pursue strategies that we know will get them where they need to go. The first thing you have to do is be sure and implement these strategies.

The bill expands the educational efforts to understand addiction as a chronic illness. That promotes treatment and recovery and prevention as a way to prevent abuse from going forward. The bill also expands resources to identify and to treat the incarcerated population suffering from addiction disorders with evidence-based treatment.

Finally, it expands disposal sites for unwanted prescription medications to help them out of the hands of children and adolescents. Way too many unused painkillers are still in people’s medicine cabinets or their dresser drawer. The problem with that is, if they know where you have those painkillers, they want to find them and, once they know where they are, to find them again.

This bill represents a strong bipartisan effort to address this epidemic. I filed two amendments that I think will improve the bill. I hope to see them in the managers’ package. The first amendment will just simply expand the efforts that we have already made in a bill that Senator STABENOW and I introduced a couple of years ago and that got a significant pilot project in the Excellence in Mental Health Act.

What that does is to provide 24-hour access for people living with behavioral health issues—with mental health issues. That would include substance abuse disorder. Excellence in Mental Health Act created a demonstration program that really just simply, in the right kind of facilities, requires that mental health is dealt with like all other health—that behavioral health is dealt with like all other health.

When we started that debate, there was a belief that no more than 20 States would implement Excellence in Mental Health if every State in the country were allowed to do it if they wanted to. We now have 24 States that have applied to be one of the eight State pilots. The administration said: Why don’t we increase the 8 States to 14 States? We have an amendment to that bill that says: Let’s go ahead and increase the 14 States to all 24 States, because not only is this the right thing to do but what these States will find out is that when you deal with mental health like all other health, you probably save money because the behavioral health issues have so much more easily dealt with.

It has been long said that we have really turned over, in an outrageous way, the mental health obligations of our society to the local police departments and the emergency rooms. That is no way to do this. It is no way to solve this problem. We are about 50 years behind. We are beginning now to catch up in the ways we should.

I also filed an amendment to authorize the Department of Health and Human Services to use telehealth to allow this program to work more effectively, to allow telehealth to be one of the specifically reimbursable opportunities here.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, individuals in rural communities are more likely—not as likely, not less likely, but more likely—to overdose on prescription painkillers than people in the city or urban areas. In fact, death rates from overdoses in rural areas now greatly outpace the rate in large metropolitan areas, which historically had higher rates.

So what do you do to connect those individuals with the kind of help they might need on a basis that they can turn to that help when they need to? One way to do that, certainly, is telehealth treatment options. Telehealth allows individuals who are geographically underserved areas—many of whom just simply don’t have other treatment options—to receive the care they need, to receive the attention their issue needs remotely.

Additionally, telehealth can be an important component in ensuring that those patients receiving treatment for pain management use opioids effectively and appropriately and don’t get started down the wrong path and the wrong way. In July 2014, the Journal of the American Medical Association published a study that followed patients who reported moderate to intense chronic musculoskeletal pain. Of the 250 patients in the study, half received the normal standard care, and half received a year of telephone monitoring in addition to normal care.

Patients who were monitored via telehealth were twice as likely to report less pain after 12 months, having the normal standard care, and half received a year of telephone monitoring in addition to normal care.
have clearly noted that fewer tele-
health patients started taking esca-
lated doses of opioids than people who were simply taking medicine on their
own. Telehealth holds promise in lots
of areas. I believe this happens to be
one of them. As chairman of the Labor,
Health, Education, and Human Services
Subcommittee, I was proud to see us
increase funding at a 284-percent in-
crease. I will say again that we did
that by cutting funding in other areas.
One of the things the government has
to start doing is to truly prioritize. If
everything is a priority, nothing is a
priority.

Today, with this piece of legislation,
the Senate is telling our friends on the
other side of the Capitol and around the
country that this is an epidemic we
intend to deal with. I look forward to
the continuation of this debate, the
end of this debate, and passing this
bill.

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

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

FREEDOM FOR BOB LEVINSON

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I wish to speak about Bob Levinson, a retired
FBI agent who 9 years ago today dis-
appeared in Iran. He was on the tour-
ists island of Kish. It is a little island off
the coast of Iran, and it is Iranian ter-
ritory. It is in the Persian Gulf. It is
just a few minutes' flight from Dubai.
Bob Levinson was there. There is con-
flicting information, but in the process
of checking it out, I went to see him
in his hotel and getting into a cab and
going to the airport to return—I think to Dubai—he dis-
appeared 9 years ago today.

There is a lot of mystery surrounding
the disappearance, and there is a lot of
mystery surrounding what has hap-
pened ever since. There is a mystery as
to why the FBI, shortly after his dis-
appearance, was somewhat lackadais-
ical about pursuing it. It is a mystery as
to why the CIA was not coordinating
with the FBI in pursuing vigorously the
disappearance of Bob. There is no myst-
ery surrounding the fact that, fi-
nally, the two agencies got their act
together and started to vigorously pur-
sue the disappearance of Bob Levinson.
I wish to give great credit to the agen-
cy, since they tried to get to the bot-
tom of it, but that has led us nowhere,
and here we are 9 years later.

It is particularly troubling to all of
us, including all of our negotiating
team for the Iranian nuclear agree-
ment because at every meeting, both
high level and low level, at the direc-
tion of our Secretary of State, first
Hillary Clinton and then John Kerry,
another way to get to the Supreme Leader. Maybe it is through some of these private contacts. Why has that not been coordinated? I know the White House is involved in this, but do they know about that 2011 meeting? If FBI agents were there on the case, why wasn’t the White House notified along with the leadership of the FBI? Something is terribly amiss, and we need to get to the bottom of it.

Sadly, on this ninth year of Bob Levinson’s disappearance, a patriotic American who—poof—on the way to the airport disappeared from Kish Island, Iran—sadly, 9 years later, there is no information about bringing Bob Levinson home.

To the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, the head of the FBI, the head of all of our alphabet agencies: It is time to get the information about Bob and bring him home.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 324, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 324) to authorize the Attorney General to award grants to address the national epidemics of prescription opioid abuse and heroin use.

Pendulum:

Grassley amendment No. 3378, in the nature of a substitute.

Grassley (for Donnelly/Capito) modified amendment No. 3374 (to amendment No. 3378), to provide follow-up services to individuals who have received opioid overdose reversal drugs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided between the two managers or their designees.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

REMEMBERING JUSTICE SCALIA

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, on February 13, 2016, the Supreme Court lost one of its Justices, our Nation lost a true legal giant.

Justice Scalia was described by colleagues as “extraordinary,” “treasured,” and “a stylistic genius.” Beyond his unwavering dedication to upholding the originalist viewpoint of the Constitution, Justice Scalia was also wholeheartedly committed to his family. He was a husband, father of 9, and grandfather to 36 grandchildren.

His son Paul said of him during his homily:

God blessed Dad with a love for his family. . . . He was the father that God gave us for the great adventure of family life. . . . He loved us, and sought to show that love. And sought to share the blessing of the faith he treasured. And he gave us one another, to have each other for support. That’s the greatest wealth parents can bestow, and right now we are particularly grateful for it.

Justice Antonin Scalia was nominated to the Court in 1986 by President Reagan and was confirmed by the Senate in a unanimous vote. While his time on the Court often led to some criticism of his legal opinions and his very colorful dissents, he remained respected by his colleagues, even those of the opposite end of the judicial spectrum. This is a sign of true character—to have an open, honest debate about a particular issue while respecting the individual person holding an opinion different from your own.

Justice Scalia said:

I attack ideas. I don’t attack people. And some very good people have some very bad ideas. And if you can’t separate the two, you gotta get outta the business is closed.

We are different, but we are one. Different in our interpretation of written texts. One in our reverence for the Constitution and the institution we serve. From our years together on the D.C. Circuit, we were best buddies. We disagreed and then, but when I wrote for the Court and received a Scalia dissent, the opinion ultimately released was notably better than my initial circular.

Justice Scalia was known for his wit and his sarcasm in his writings, famously referring to legal interpretations as “jiggery-pokery,” “pure applesauce,” and “a ghoul in a late horror movie.” Yet it was these same criticisms that Justice Ginsburg said nailed the weak spots in her opinions and gave her what she needed to strengthen her writings.

Justice Scalia represented a consistent, constitutional voice on the Supreme Court. Just as the Constitution is the pillar of our legal system, so too is his affirmation to this foundational document of our Nation. He said:

It is an essential that I want to defend. . . . It’s what did the words mean to the people who ratified the Bill of Rights or who ratified the Constitution, as opposed to what people today would like.

Justice Kennedy said:

In years to come any history of the Supreme Court will, and must, recount the wisdom, scholarship, and technical brilliance that Justice Scalia brought to the Court. His insistence on demanding standards shaped the work of the Court in its private discussions, its oral arguments, and its written opinions. Yet these historic achievements are all the more impressive and compelling because the foundations of Justice Scalia’s jurisprudence, the driving force in all his work, and his powerful personality were shaped by an unyielding commitment to the Constitution of the United States and to the highest ethical and moral standards.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. President, with Justice Scalia’s passing, we have a vacancy on the Court to fill.

The question is, When?

I would submit, with only months left until the Presidential election, that we should let the people decide.

I have heard over and over for the past 7 years that elections have consequences, but apparently some people seem to only think elections have consequences on Presidential elections. The American people elected a brand new Senate in 2014 because of their incredible frustration with the operation of the previous Senate and because of the direction that we are now heading under this President.

I have heard this argument for years: The President should be able to do what he wants. He is the President. But may I remind everyone of a document in our National Archives called the U.S. Constitution, which gives divided power to our Nation. The President is not over the Senate, not over the House, and not over the Supreme Court.

Hyperbole of this has been overwhelming to me in the debate of the past few weeks. I have heard that unless we replace Justice Scalia right now, we will “shut down the court.” I have heard on this floor people say that if we don’t replace Justice Scalia immediately, it is “dangerous,” it is unprecedented,” It is unheard of. I have heard: “Do your job”—a failure to do your duty. I even heard one Senator say: “The Constitution says the President shall appoint and the Senate shall consent.”

Well, let me show you article II, section 2 of the Constitution where that comes up. It says: “The President ‘shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate’—the President shall nominate. That is his constitutional responsibility. But it is not the constitutional responsibility—it never says the Senate shall give consent to the President. Why? Because the Constitution gives the role of selecting a Supreme Court nominee in a 50-50 responsibility between the Senate and the President of the United States.

The President shall nominate; that is his responsibility. But that only moves forward with the advice and consent of the Senate. There is no ‘shall give consent.’ There is no requirement how it moves.

In fact, Alexander Hamilton in The Federalist Papers, on this very issue, said that the “ordinary power of appointment is confided to the President and Senate jointly.”

This is a 50-50 agreement. What we are facing right now are incredible attacks on the chairman of the Judiciary
Committee because he dares to do what Vice President BIDEN, Senator SCHUMER, and Senator REID recommended years ago. I even heard that we shouldn’t listen to the words of Vice President BIDEN. I would understand why people would say that, because when you go back to Vice President BIDEN’s words, when he was a Senator and chairman of the Judiciary Committee, in the same spot Chairman GRASSLEY is in now, this is what, at that time, Senator BIDEN said: Senator BIDEN, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, arguing on this same issue, said: “Arguing from constitutional history and Senate precedent, I want to address one question and one question only: What are the rights and duties of the Senate in considering nominees to the Supreme Court?”

This is from Vice President BIDEN—then Senator BIDEN:

Some argue that the Senate should defer to the President’s choice of a Supreme Court Justice, the men and women at the apex of the independent third branch of Government.

Can our Supreme Court nomination and confirmation process, so wrecked by discord and bitterness, be repaired in a Presidential election year?

Vice President BIDEN, as Senator BIDEN, said:

History teaches us that this is extremely unlikely. Some of our Nation’s most bitter and heated confirmation fights have come in Presidential election years.

The Senate too, Mr. President, must consider how it would respond to a Supreme Court vacancy that would occur in the full throes of an election year.

Vice President BIDEN at that time said this:

It is my view that if the President goes the way of Presidents FDR and Johnson and presses an election-year nomination, the Senate Judiciary Committee should serioulsy consider not scheduling confirmation hearings on the nomination until after the political campaign season is over.

He said, instead:

It would be our pragmatic conclusion that once the political season is under way, and it is, action on a Supreme Court nomination must be put off until after the election campaign is over. That is what is fair to the nominee and is central to the process. Otherwise, it seems to me, Mr. President, we will be in deep trouble as an institution.

This past week Senator BIDEN came to the floor to discuss Senator GRASSLEY and what he is doing, which is exactly what then-Senator BIDEN recommended to be done, and he made this statement:

Senator BIDEN said this past week:

Last Thursday, the senior Senator from Iowa addressed the Conservative Political Action Conference, CPAC, which took place here in Washington. In his speech to them, here is what Senator Grassley said: “I feel it's about time that we have a national debate on the Supreme Court and how it fits in with our constitutional system of government.”

Then Senator REID continued:

The chairman of the Judiciary Committee is suggesting that the President and his Political Party, reevaluate the Constitution of the United States, and change the Constitution of the United States. Why is Senator Grassley debating what the Constitution makes clear? The Senate must provide its advice and consent on nominees appointed by the President to the Supreme Court. Think of the irony. Justice Scalia was a strict constitutionalist. Yet now, in the weeks following his death, Senator Grassley wants to throw out the Constitution just because President Obama gets to pick Scalia’s replacement.

That is what Senator REID said this week:

Let’s look at what Senator REID said in 2005 on this exact same issue. In 2005, on this floor, Senator REID said: “The President of the United States has just joined the fray to become the latest to rewrite the Constitution and reinvent reality.”

This is speaking of President Bush at the time. Senator REID continued, “Speaking to fellow Republicans Tuesday night, two days ago. He said that the Senate has a duty to promptly consider each nominee on the Senate floor, discuss and debate their qualifications and then give them the up-or-down vote that they deserve.”

Referring to the President’s words—duty to whom? The duties of the Senate.” This is from Senator REID in 2005:

The duties of the Senate are set forth in the U.S. Constitution. Nowhere in that document does it say the Senate has a duty to give Presidential appointees a vote. The fact was even acknowledged by the majority leader that a vote is not required. Senator Byrd told the majority that the Constitution only requires that a vote be held. Senator Byrd even acknowledged by the majority leader that a vote is not required. Senator Byrd told the majority that the Constitution only requires that a vote be held. Senator Byrd even acknowledged by the majority leader that a vote is not required. Senator Byrd told the majority that the Constitution only requires that a vote be held. Senator Byrd even acknowledged by the majority leader that a vote is not required. Senator Byrd told the majority that the Constitution only requires that a vote be held. Senator Byrd even acknowledged by the majority leader that a vote is not required. Senator Byrd told the majority that the Constitution only requires that a vote be held.

Continuing with what Senator REID said:

It is clear that the President misunderstands the meaning of the advice and consent clause. That is not how America works. The Senate is not a rubber stamp for the executive branch.

So earlier this week, Senator REID chastised Senator GRASSLEY, saying he wants to rewrite the Constitution. In 2005 Senator REID stood on this floor and encouraged all Members to read the Constitution—that it nowhere requires that we take an up-or-down vote. So I don’t know which one to take on this—the current statements from Senator REID or the previous statements from Senator REID—because they are in direct contradiction.

Speaking about the last 18 months of President Bush’s term as President, said:

For the rest of this President’s term and if there is another Republican elected with the same selection criteria let me say this: We should reverse the presumption of confirmation. The Supreme Court is dangerously out of balance. We cannot afford to see Justice Stevens replaced by another Roberts; or Justice Ginsburg replaced by another Alito.

That is what I have been the track record of this President and the experience of obfuscation at the hearings, with respect to the Supreme Court, at the Senate Judiciary Committee because he dares to do what Vice President BIDEN, Senator SCHUMER, and, when they were here, Senator Obama and Senator BIDEN have all filibustered Supreme Court nominees when they were Senators—all four of them have. Suddenly, this is a dangerous idea that will shut down justice and is completely unconstitutional, and there are shouts of “Do your job” that come from the same Senate leaders who blocked untold nominations from untold Republican Presidents.”

There is a lot of emotion in this body. I get that. There are a lot of politics in this process. I would hope to bring some facts to light and to turn down the hyperbole and all the rhetoric. So let me bring some basic facts to this.

The last time a Supreme Court vacancy arose in an election year and the Senate approved a nominee to the Court in that same year was 1932. Since there is no nominee right now, it would not be possible to fill the vacancy in time for that individual to hear cases in the spring session of the Supreme Court. That means any nomination selected now would only be able to serve—in our colleagues’ arguments—in the fall, which is a much shorter session of the Supreme Court, before this President actually leaves. So we are talking about the final session at the end of this fall—a very few number of cases.

Justice Stephen Breyer, just a few weeks ago, stated this about the passing of Justice Scalia:

We’ll miss him, but we’ll do our work. For the most part, it will not change.

The Supreme Court is open and is working this week. In fact, the Court hasn’t halted at all. The Court has heard 10 cases already since Justice Scalia’s passing, and they are continuing to release decisions.

It is a myth that there needs to be an uneven number of Justices for the Supreme Court to actually work. In the past 6 years, 80 percent of the cases were decided 6 to 3 or greater. So it is a small minority of cases that ever get to a 5-to-4 decision. And we don’t know that a 5-to-4 would end up not being a 5-to-3 at this point.

Eight members can operate the Court. In fact, the Constitution doesn’t even give a specific number to the Justices. How many Justices are on the Supreme Court has always been a decision of the President and the Congress.
together. The first Congress, for example, enacted the Judiciary Act of 1789, which stated the Supreme Court consists of “a chief justice and five associate justices.” If you are counting right, that is six Justices on the early Supreme Court.

The size of the Court varied during the 19th century, with the Court shrinking to 5 Justices for a while, following the passage of the Judiciary Act of 1801, growing to as large as 10 Justices in 1869, Congress changed the number to nine, where it has remained.

But the Court doesn’t need nine Justices to actually decide a case. In fact, Congress has established the Supreme requirements to be only six. If the Court ends in a tie decision, 4 to 4, or in the case of six Justices, 3 to 3, the Court will not write an opinion but will affirm the lower court, or it will ask for a reargument.

In other words, the Court is already set up to function and is functioning, and it will continue to function with eight people. I would say what is really happening is that the Democrats, who implemented the nuclear option while they were leading the Senate and packed all the lower courts, urgently want to be able to pack the Supreme Court as well. That will not happen.

We will also not allow a recess appointment, as has been floated multiple times in the media—the President will just do a recess appointment and go around us. The Senate chooses when the Senate ends for the President. So we can do this: We can remain in continuous session without recess to prevent a recess appointment by this President through the rest of this year.

Many of my Republican colleagues and I have already agreed to be in Washington every 3 days for the rest of this year to gavel in this body in pro forma session so this President cannot put in a recess appointment judge.

Ironically enough, this right of the Senate was codified in the 1913 Judiciary Act, which was approved by the Supreme Court just a few years ago by a 9-0 ruling when this President tried to force in new members on the National Labor Relations Board through a recess appointment, and this Supreme Court kicked those out, saying the President cannot choose when the Senate is in recess.

Our Nation faces really big issues: accelerating debt, threats from terrorism, a struggling economy, major educational, and health care reform issues. This is a moment when the people of the United States should speak about the direction of our Nation. We are still a nation of the people, by the people, for the people. And for the next President, the next Supreme Court nomination, we should let the President and the people, for the people. And for the next President, the next Supreme Court nomination, we should let the people decide.

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

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

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, last month we all learned with great sadness of Justice Antonin Scalia’s passing after nearly 30 years on the Court. He would have turned 80 years old on Friday, March 11.

In recent weeks, foremost on people’s minds as they reflect on Justice Scalia’s legacy and his life is his dedication to constitutional and statutory text, his view that the U.S. Constitution is a sacred document which must be read and adhered to.

His decisions and opinions were aimed to follow the Constitution wherever it took him, even if it may not always be in agreement with what the President and Congress would agree politically. Justice Scalia not only understood the importance of not legislating from the bench, but he also cared deeply about the lesson being taught by the Court. Through his writings, his opinions, including his dissents, he taught us great lessons.

Now all of this is very important and relevant, ironically, as we consider the rule and the ability of the President to fill his vacancy. Instead, unfortunately, we have seen rhetoric and arguments which fly in the face of that dedication to the text, to the Constitution, to statutory law and rules, and following the rule.

My esteemed Democratic colleagues have taken to the Senate floor, and they have encouraged outside groups to storm committee rooms—all arguing that somehow there is a legislative or constitutional mandate that the Senate have hearings, take a vote now, and not allow the American people to weigh in through the election. They argue that somehow the Senate is constitutionally obligated to hold hearings and vote on the nomination, but as Justice Scalia would surely point out: Read the text. Look at the Constitution. Look at all relevant statutes and rules. That is not the case. It is clear, otherwise. In fact, it is crystal clear. So let’s do that in homage to Justice Scalia.

He wrote many opinions arguing for exactly what I am saying: Read the clear language that is at issue—either the Constitutions, or whatever is at issue. He wrote opinions against what before his time was rampant use of so-called legislative history, looking at the history of how a law was passed really to give people fodder to make up and reach almost any conclusion and interpretation they want to. Justice Scalia taught us—and he had a real impact on the Court through his decisions—that we need an unwaivering commitment to principle and respect to statutory text as written.

As he often said in so many different ways, “Legislative history is irrelevant when the statutory text is clear.” In one opinion he noted that “if one were to search for an interpretive technique that, on the whole, was more likely to confuse than to clarify, one could hardly find a more promising candidate than legislative history.” He said directly that “our case has said that legislative history is irrelevant when the statutory text is clear.”

Again, that is a big part of his legacy and very relevant in this discussion about how the Senate should fulfill its duty. Let’s look to the text of the Constitution and any relevant text like our rules below the Constitution.

In the U.S. Constitution, article II, section 2, clause 2 says clearly: The President “shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for and which shall be established by law.”

That is what it says on the issue. That is all it says on the issue. Those words are straightforward, and those words do not mandate a hearing or a vote in any certain timeframe. It is very clear from the Founders and from numerous Court decisions since then that within the constraints of those words, the Senate sets its rules of how to proceed on all Senate matters, including confirmations. It is very important and very clear text that we should read words and adhere to are the standing Senate rules. Senate rule XXXI states: “When nominations shall be made by the President of the United States to the Senate, they shall, unless otherwise ordered, be referred to appropriate committees; and the final question on every nomination shall be, ‘Will the Senate advise and consent to this nomination?’” With that, I yield to the Committee to report on the action this Congress.
the Senate favorably, unfavorably, or without recommendation, or it can choose to take no action.

So they say the obvious from reading the relevant text. Those are the options. There is no requirement for a hearing or a vote within any certain timeframe.

There are other “authorities”—I will put that in air quotes—which confirm this view, and ironically those authorities I am referring to are Democrats who are taking exactly the opposite view now. When the shoe was on the other foot, time and time again, they said: There is no requirement to move forward on any certain timeframe.

The minority leader, HARRY REID, said: “Nowhere in [the Constitution] does it say the Senate has a duty to give Presidential [nominees] a vote. It says appointments shall be made with the advice and consent of the Senate. That is very different than saying every nominee receives a vote.” That is a direct quote.

In June of 2003, Senator PATRICK LEAHY—he is significant because he is ranking member of the Judiciary Committee—said clearly:

The Constitution divides the appointment power between the President and the Senate. It expects senators to advise the President, not just rubber stamp his choices. It says advise and consent, not nominate and rubber stamp.

Even further back, in June of 1999, then-Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, now-Vice President JOE BIDEN argued for the need to set aside partisanship and work to bring unity forward in the Senate by saying: “President Clinton should consider following the practice of a majority of his predecessors and not name a nominee until after the November election is completed.” He said that during a Presidential election year, just like we are in this year, a Presidential election year right now.

CHUCK SCHUMER, another leader of the Judiciary Committee, said much the same thing in the past, making crystal clear that there is no requirement—in fact, he said 18 months before the expiration of President Bush’s term. So not during his last year, but 18 months before the end of that term that the Senate shouldn’t confirm any Bush nominee, except in extraordinary circumstances.

It is very clear from their own words that there is no obligation to use any certain timeframe to have any absolute committee hearing or vote within a certain period of time. So then the question is, What is the best thing to do for the American people? I firmly believe the best thing to do for the American people is to put the American people in charge, to put them in the lead, to maximize their role, their power, and their vote. That is what the opportunity of a major Presidential election gives us.

I urge my colleagues to put the American people in charge. This is a big decision, and I think we will do far better putting them in charge than allowing some insider Washington game to control and manipulate the process without hearing their voice, which we have every opportunity to properly hear through this important election this year.

Mr. 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.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. 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. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am so pleased we are making strong progress on the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, and I hope we will get this bill done within a day. It is very important, especially to States with rural areas, such as the Presiding Officer’s and mine, and I am glad we are starting to make headway.

U.S.-CANADA RELATIONS

Today, Mr. President, I am here to talk about something else, and that is the importance of the U.S. relationship with Canada. Senator CRAPO and I co-chair the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group and have been working in the trenches on everything from softwood lumber, to the Detroit-Windsor bridge crossing, to issues of intellectual property, to dairy, to beef, and with the arrival of Prime Minister Trudeau, this work has suddenly gotten a little more glamorous. We are excited about that and excited about the new interest in our important relationship with Canada. In fact, Canada is one of our largest trading partners. There is so much business that goes on between the Presiding Officer’s State and Canada, as well as my State and Canada. Prime Minister Trudeau is bringing a newfound interest in this work.

Many of our two countries’ priorities, which include national security, infrastructure, and energy, align closely. During this visit, I expect our relationship will deepen, and we will hear more about how our two nations will work together on our shared priorities. We hope they will discuss hockey, which is something that is very important to Minnesota and Canada. A number of our hockey players have actually come from Canada, and many of the Canadian hockey players have come from Minnesota. But we think there are other important topics as well.
First, I will start with our economic relationship—a relationship that supports 9 million U.S. jobs. Canada purchases more goods from America than any other nation. If you asked people what country in the world is the biggest purchaser of U.S. goods, they would say China. They can be wrong on that fact that the nation that buys more goods from the United States is Canada. Canada is the No. 1 buyer of goods produced in 35 out of 50 States, including Minnesota. Last year Canadians bought $376 billion worth of goods made by American businesses, and that is a very big number. The United States imports more than $300 billion in Canadian goods every year.

Over the years, to enhance this relationship, we have taken many important steps to improve the flow of travelers and goods across our common border. In the wake of September 11, we created a U.S. passport card, which is a secure but less expensive and more convenient alternative to a traditional passport. We removed unnecessary double stamping of luggage—a bipartisan bill I passed with Senator ROY BLUNT of Missouri—and then expanded the number of preclearance airports, which allows American security personnel to be in those airports. I think we are up to 15 now.

We have agreed to build a new bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit, MI. It is a source of great concern. The bridge that is there now is privately owned and has huge lines. It is not a very good situation. So a new bridge is in the works, and we are very excited that our two countries worked on that together.

I especially want to acknowledge Ambassador Doer, the longtime Ambassador from Canada to the United States who worked on that with our two Ambassadors. I also want to acknowledge the newly named Canadian Ambassador, Ambassador David MacNaughton, who will continue the strong diplomatic relations between our countries.

Our national security partnership is also incredibly important. We share the longest border in the world with Canada. Obviously border issues are important, but more than that, Canada, as part of NATO, has worked with us not only in Afghanistan, where they supplied many troops and now provide funding there, but they are also on the frontline with ISIS. They actually have hundreds of soldiers working the frontline there. I would be remiss not to mention them standing up to Russian aggression in Ukraine. Believe it or not, Canada has a major Ukrainian population, and they have been our friend in dealing with Ukraine as well. Prime Minister Trudeau has also been a leader in welcoming refugees to the country. Right after his election, he showed up at the airport to greet Syrian refugees. It was not just a symbol; they actually brought in 25,000 Syrian refugees during the last year and are expected to take in 10,000 more this year, which is significantly more in total than the United States has been able to bring in. We know the vetting process is incredibly important, but we do want to thank Canada for taking part in what is a travesty internationally.

They are working on combating Ebola with initiatives such as Power Africa and also working with us on the climate change numbers.

By the way, our two countries are working together with Mexico. We have formed a very powerful trading bloc, and we want to encourage that standards and other things that we do in terms of building electrical capabilities to allow us, as a North American block, with a new day in North America, which was agreed to among the three Presidents of countries in the last 2 years, to compete in the block in an increasingly competitive global economy, including harmonizing emission standards and doing other work together.

As one of the co-chairs of the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group, we welcome the new Prime Minister to Washington. When I was sworn in as a U.S. Senator in 2013, my friends and colleagues celebrated at the Canadian Embassy. I am the first person I have found to have my swearing-in at the Canadian Embassy, but I chose it to make a point—that we should not forget one of our best trading partners. For years it was the only Embassy draped in banners that read “friends, neighbors, partners, allies.” So many other countries do not acknowledge their friendship with the United States in a way that I think they should. Canada doesn’t hide it. Canada is proud of it. And we welcome the Prime Minister today.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time on amendment No. 3378 is expired.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 3374, AS MODIFIED

The question occurs on amendment No. 3374, offered by the Senator from Iowa, Mr. GRASSLEY, for the Senator from Indiana, Mr. DONNELLY.

Hearing no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment. The amendment (No. 3374), as modified, was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 3378, AS AMENDED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question occurs on amendment No. 3378, offered by the Senator from Iowa, Mr. GRASSLEY.

Hearing no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment. The amendment (No. 3378), as amended, was agreed to.

LOUW MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on S. 524, a bill to authorize the Attorney General to award grants to address the national epidemics of prescription opioid abuse and heroin use.


The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum count has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on S. 524, a bill to authorize the Attorney General to award grants to address the national epidemics of prescription opioid abuse and heroin use, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUHNO).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. McCASKILL) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 93, nays 3, as follows:

[Roll Call Vote No. 33 Leg.]

YEAS—93

Alexander
Aytote
Baldwin
Barrasso
Bennet
Binnsental
Blunt
Boozman
Boxer
Burr
Cantwell
Capito
Carper
Cassidy
Coates
Cochran
Collins
Cochran
Collins
Coomes
Corzine
Cotton
Craig
Daines
Donnelly
Durbin
Enzi
Enrath

C Feinstein
A Fischer
E Franken
R Gardner
E Gillibrand
G Gramm
E Grassley
E Boozman
E Boxer
E Burr
E Cantwell
E Capito
E Carper
E Cassidy
E Coates
E Collins
E Cochran
E Collins
E Coon
E Corker
E Cornyn
E Cotton
E Craig
E Daines
E Donnelly
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Stabenow
Sullivan
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Whitehouse
Wicker
Wyden

NAYS—3

Lee
Crus
Merkel

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Roberts

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Yates

Sasse

NORT VOTING—4

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 93, the nays are 3.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Utah.
FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, the opening words to the preamble of the Constitution of the United States are familiar to all of us: “We the People.” But what do those words mean? If I may, Mr. President, I would like to propose that we consider the words of James Madison, who established the U.S. Constitution. We established, among other things, the Senate in article I, section 1, of the Constitution. It is for “the People” that my colleagues and I, along with every other public official across these United States, now serve.

And it was on behalf of “the People” that the Constitution established “one supreme Court,” consisting of judges appointed “by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate.” Since the tragic passing of the late Justice Antonin Scalia, there has been a great deal of debate about this particular provision of the Constitution. But there should be no controversy. The text of our founding charter is clear.

The President has full and complete power to nominate individuals to the Supreme Court, and the Senate has full and complete power to reject or confirm the nominee. It is as simple as that. The Senate retains complete discretion with respect to whether it should even consider—much less accept or reject—Presidential nominees.

This should not be controversial. It is how virtually every student of the Constitution—and how nearly every Member of Congress—has understood the Senate’s power of advice and consent for the past 228 years since the Constitution was ratified.

Senator HARRY REID said in 2005: “Nowhere in that document does it say the Senate has a duty to give presidential nominees a vote.”

Senator PAT LEAHY in 2003 acknowledged that the power of “advice and consent” included the power to withhold consent.

Then-Senator JOE BIDEN in 1992 argued from the floor of this Chamber that the Senate should refuse to consider a Supreme Court nominee until the people had spoken in the upcoming Presidential election.

But now, with the Presidential election in full swing, some of my friends on the other side of the aisle maintain that the opposite is true. Some argue instead that the Senate is constitutionally obligated to hold hearings and to vote on any candidate President Obama might eventually nominate to replace Justice Scalia on the Supreme Court. I respectfully dissent.

If this a-textual and a-historical account of the Constitution were accurate—and it is not, if it were—then prior Senates violated the Constitution when they did not cast up-or-down votes on Supreme Court nominees. Even the Standing Rules of the Senate would be subject under this theory, contemplating as they do that “[n]ominations neither confirmed nor rejected during the session at which they are made shall not be acted upon at any succeeding session without being again made to the Senate by the President.”

Neither does the prospect of a temporary eight-member Supreme Court stifle judicial activity. Judges frequently participate, almost entirely as a result of recusals arising, as they often do in this circumstance, from Justice Kagan’s nomination. Similarly, following the retirement of Justice Powell in 1987, the Court acted on 80 cases with 8 or fewer Justices. In short, the sky does not fall when the Court operates with only eight Justices. As Justice Breyer recently stated, the work of the Court “[f]or the most part . . . will not change.”

Now, we have to remember that any Supreme Court nominee made by President Obama would not be seated until weeks before the people choose the next President. Let me explain what I mean by that. Even if the President nominated a Supreme Court Justice today, that confirmation could not be completed until after the Supreme Court is scheduled to have heard its last oral arguments for this term—the term that began in October of 2015. What does that mean? Well, it means that for the rest of this year, the Justice couldn’t participate in cases being argued this year. What that also means is that by the time the Court resumes its work and begins its next session starting this fall, we would be just weeks before the next Presidential election. Yet that would be the first moment at which any newly confirmed Justice would start hearing cases being argued before the Court—cases being argued on their merits for consideration before the Court—just weeks before the next Presidential election.

Consider also that since the nomination of Justice Scalia to the Supreme Court, last November, over 30 years ago, it has taken more than 70 days, on average, for the Senate to confirm or reject a nominee after that nominee has been submitted to the Senate for its advice and consent.

So, again, based on that historical average, even if the President nominated somebody today and assuming that nominee were confirmed, an individual would not be seated in time to hear or rule on any of the cases the Court is considering on the merits for the first time in weeks, and that would, of course, mean that the next time arguments were heard, the first time this particular Justice could participate in such arguments on the merits before the Court would be just weeks before the Presidential election.

This is a lifetime appointment to the highest Court in the land—a Court that considers not only the interpretation and application of laws, statutes, and regulations in operation within the Federal Government, but also the very meaning of the Constitution itself. In light of the fact that this is a lifetime appointment to that Court and in light of the fact that the people are about to speak this November to decide who ought to occupy the Oval Office, we should, in respect and deference to the people of this great country, wait until the American people have spoken.

They deserve a voice.

In my view, the future of the Supreme Court is now at stake, and the election for our next President is also, of course, well underway already. So it is the people who should determine what kind of Supreme Court they wish to have.

Now, the President is entitled, of course, to discharge his own constitutional authority to nominate. No one can take that from him. That belongs to him. But the Senate is equally entitled to withhold consent and to protect the people’s voice. We have to remember that it was considered at the Constitutional Convention the possibility that the Senate would itself have the exclusive power to nominate executive branch officials. It was also suggested that the Senate be the branch that had the power over the President’s appointment prerogative. Neither of those ended up in the Constitution. Instead, what ended up in the Constitution, based, I believe, on the Massachusetts Constitution, was a shared power—one in which the President has the power to nominate but does not have the power to appoint, unless or until such time as the Senate chooses to grant its advice and consent and thereby confirm a nominee put forward by the President.

As James Madison wrote in The Federalist Papers, ambition must counter-act ambition, and the people should decide.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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. WARREN. 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. LEE. Mr. President, there is a vacancy on the most important Court in America, and the message from Senate Republicans is crystal clear: Forget the Constitution. It doesn’t matter who President Obama nomintates because the Republicans will allow no nominees that the President will hold no hearings on that nominee.

Their response to one of the most solemn and consequential tasks that our
government performs—the confirmation of a Supreme Court Justice—will be to pretend that that nominee and President Obama himself simply do not exist—cannot see them, cannot hear them. At the same time they are blocking all possible Supreme Court nominees, Senate Republicans are in a panic because their party seems to be on the verge of nominating one of two extremists for President—two candidates who think nothing of attacking the legitimacy of their political opponents and demeaning millions of Americans, two candidates whose extremism, Republicans worry, will lead their party to defeat in November.

These are not separate issues. They are the same issue. If Republican Senators want to stand up to extremists running for President, they can start right now by standing up to extremists in the Senate. They can start by doing what they were elected to do right here in the Senate. They can start by doing their jobs.

The refusal of the Republican Senators to execute the most basic constitutional duties of their office is shocking but not new. Article II, section 2 of the Constitution says that the President of the United States “shall nominate” judges, executive officials, and justices to the Supreme Court with the “Advice and Consent of the Senate.” There is no secret clause that says “except when that President is a Democrat,” but for 7 years that is how Republicans in the Senate have acted. Since the first day of the Obama Presidency, Republican Senators have bowed to extremists who have rejected the Obama Presidency and abused the rules of the Senate in an all-out effort to cripple his administration and to paralyze the Federal courts. The Constitution directs Senators to provide advice and consent on the President’s nominees for the Supreme Court with the President's oath to uphold the Constitution. If Senators object to a nominee’s qualifications, they can vote no and they can explain themselves to the American people. President Obama and I are members of the same political party, but I haven’t agreed with every single nomination he has made, and I haven’t been shy about it. That is how advice and consent works. Learn about the nominee and then use your best faith to make a decision. Senate Republicans do pretty much everything they can to avoid acknowledging the legitimacy of our democratically elected President. For too long the Republicans in the Senate have wanted to have it both ways. They want to feed the ugly lies and nullify the Obama Presidency while also claiming they can govern responsibly. Well, that game is over. Candidates motivated by bigotry and resentment, candidates unable to reject the same extremism that has been nurtured along for 7 years right here in the U.S. Senate are on the verge of winning the Republican Party’s nomination for President.

Now Republican Senators must make a decision because here is the deal: Extremists may not like it, but Barack Obama won the Presidency in 2008 by 9 million votes. He won reelection in 2012 by 5 million votes. There were no recounts and no hanging chads, no stuffing of voting machines, no intervention by the U.S. Supreme Court. No. President Obama was elected the legitimate President 7 years ago, and he is the legitimate President right now. So if it is true that some Republican Senators are finally ready to stand up to the extremism that denies the legitimacy of this President and of the Constitution, I say to you: Do your job. Vote for a Supreme Court Justice to do your job. Vote on district court judges and circuit court judges. Do your job. Vote on Ambassadors. Do your job. Vote on agency leaders and counterterrorism officials. If you want to stop extremism in your party, you can start by showing the American people that you respect the President of the United States and the Constitution enough to do your job right here in the U.S. Senate.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, today I rise to address the responsibility of the Senate in its advice and consent role under the Constitution. Of course, the President’s duty is to nominate a Justice when the vacancy exists for a Justice, and that responsibility is very clearly set forth in the Constitution. The Constitution also very clearly conveys the Senate’s role in providing advice and consent. This is the vision of our founding document. Actually, our Founding Fathers wrestled with exactly how to best construct this nomination and confirmation process. They knew there had to be a way to appoint judges in the judiciary and certainly ambassadors and directors in the executive branch, how to go about that. In those early efforts to craft the Constitution, some argued that this responsibility should be with the Executive, with the President; others argued that, no, no, it is better given to the body. Well, that conversation went back and forth. We can read a little bit about the thinking through Alexander Hamilton’s The Federalist Papers 76 because he laid out the conversation as it went back and forth. They recognized that there were certainly advantages to having the President make the appointments. I quote from Alexander Hamilton’s paper:

"The sole and univided responsibility of one man will naturally beget a livelier sense of duty and a more exact regard to reputation. He will under this account feel himself under stronger obligations and more interested to investigate with care the qualities requisite to the stations to be filled. In short, direct your accountability to a single individual and you shall be responsible for carrying that out."

But they were also concerned about some disadvantages of the Executive
making appointments. Giving absolute power of appointment to the President could lead to unwarranted favoritism, as it was put, or incompetence in those appointed.

Well, then again they thought, how about the Senate? They recognized that you have certainly a rich makeup of views in an assembly and perhaps that could be of value. On the other hand, they also felt that there would be a lot of horse-trading over appointments and that they would just never get the job done, and indeed, as Hamilton noted, “the intrinsic merit of the candidate will be too often left out of sight.”

So that was the dilemma, and they came up with a strategy to take the strength of the Executive and the strength of the assembly; specifically, that you would indeed have the power invested in one person, and of course the Executive, in creating nominations for the executive branch, wanted to make sure that there was an apparent desire to make sure those folks were competent, but there was also still this concern about, what if there was too much favoritism and what if individuals of unfit character were appointed? So give the Senate the power to review and provide consent or, as Hamilton wrote, “to prevent the appointment of unfit characters.” That is what it boiled down to. So the strength of the Executive and the strength of the Senate combined in order to solve this knotty problem of how you filled the key posts in the judiciary and the key posts in the executive.

All of this led to the exact crafting of article II, section 2, of the Constitution. It referred that the President—and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court,” and so on and so forth. Of course, this isn’t, when there is a vacancy, the President can if he or she desires; no, it is shall. This is a responsibility. You have to fill the position. So the President has an obligation under this clause, and we in the Senate have an obligation to follow up with the advice and consent function.

That is where we stand and why this esteemed Chamber has operated now through the more than 200 years of history in providing that check and balance on the Executive. It is the President’s responsibility to nominate, and it is our responsibility to vet those nominees, to examine them, to see if they have the fit, the characteristics of both their own qualifications and their character. That is the basis: qualifications and character. That is the question that we have addressed in this Chamber century after century. But here we are today with a unique circumstance in which the leadership of this body has said: We are not going to fulfill the responsibility that is given to us under the Constitution. We are going on strike. We don’t want to do our job.

I think the American people are saying: the opposite: Senate, do your job. Senate, you were assigned a job in the Constitution. Senators, you signed an oath by that Constitution. You have a responsibility under the vision of our Government to make it work. You have a responsibility to fulfill that job, to do that job.

The Supreme Court is only the latest example that we have had with nominations for the executive and for the judicial. I hope we can come together and develop a much more rapid system of vetting nominees and, if there is not a major objection, having those at lower levels essentially conveyed quickly into their posts, because this is something that we know will be the case.

We know that over time, there will be Republican administrations and there will be Democratic administrations. And with the vision of three co-equal branches of Government, it is not the role of Congress to systematically undermine the other two branches. That was not the design of our Constitution. So we wield a partisan curb and not to use our partisan inclinations as a tool to try to destroy the Presidency of a different political party or to pack, basically, the courts according to our own philosophy. We are not doing that now. As a body, we are failing our responsibility.

The Constitution says: Do your job. The people of America say: Do your job. The leadership here in the Senate is saying: We refuse to do our job. That is just wrong.

Our Court does play this critical role in making sure that our laws and regulations stay within the bounds of the Constitution. It is not since the Civil War that the Supreme Court has been left with a vacancy for longer than a year. The Civil War is a very unique circumstance. Since the 1980s, every person appointed to the Supreme Court has been given a prompt hearing and a vote within 100 days. Since 1793, it has taken on average only 87 days to confirm Supreme Court nominees.

We can look at the list: Justice Kagan, 88 days; Justice Sotomayor, 67 days; Alito, 83; Roberts, 63; Breyer, 74; Ginsburg, 51; Thomas, 99; Souter, 69; and through the list, Kennedy, 69; Scalia, who just passed away, 85; and Rehnquist, 89.

You notice that these are nominations by both Democratic Presidents and Republican Presidents. And in each case, regardless of the party in control of the Senate—did their job, vetted these nominees, held a vote on them, and proceeded. But now we have more than 317 days still left in this administration, and the leadership is saying: They are not going to do this job. They are not going to meet with a nominee, not going to hold a committee meeting on the nominee, not going to report to the floor, not going to hold a floor debate—not because of the standards set up in the Constitution, not because of this standard: Is this a fit character? Is he or she fit by qualifications? Is he or she fit by judicial temperament? The standard of unfit character—no, this is a strike, a job strike based solely on partisan politics. This is bringing partisan politics into the very place it should never be—confirmation of our judges not at 100 days or more than 300 days, totally out of sync with the history of this Nation, totally out of sync with the responsibility that each of us is assigned to help provide advice and consent.

More than a dozen Supreme Court Justices have been confirmed in the final year of a Presidency. I want to emphasize that because there have been folks here in the Chamber who are an embarrassment to our responsibility. In fact, they even thought there was some special rule that you don’t confirm a Supreme Court Justice in the final year of a Presidency. That simply is not true. More than a dozen Justices have been confirmed in the final year of a Presidency. Most recently, Justice Kennedy was confirmed in the last year of President Reagan’s term. It was not a Republican leader that did that confirmation. It was a Democrat party-led Senate that did that confirmation because the Democratic Party leadership and Members said: This is not partisanship. This is a responsibility we have, and we are going to execute it.

But, unfortunately, we are hearing a very different story at this moment from the Republican leadership in this body, and it is an embarrassment. It is an embarrassment to this Chamber. It is an embarrassment to our responsibility. I certainly am appealing that it be remedied. There is time to remedying it. The President hasn’t put forward his nomination yet. It is time to recognize that perhaps those comments that we put forward in the heat of the moment can be set aside and we can still do our job.

When people elect a President, they don’t say to the President: Do your job for 4 years, but you get the last year off. When they elect us, they don’t say: Well, do your job for 5 years, but you get the last year off. They certainly don’t say: And by the way, after a couple of years, you can take a year off from your constitutional responsibilities. A President is elected for all 4 years. Our responsibility is to provide advice and consent, and it goes on continuously.

In more than 200 years, the Senate has carried out its duty to give a fair and timely hearing and a floor vote to the President’s Supreme Court nominees—whether the President was a Democrat or a Republican, whether this body was led by a Democratic majority or a Republican majority. Let’s not change that tradition. Let’s not fail our responsibility. In fact, let’s honor our constitutional responsibility.
I will close by calling on my colleagues: Let’s work together to diminish the partisanship and improve the problem-solving. Let’s turn down the rhetoric in terms of our back and forth during this campaign year and, certainly, turn it down enough that we can find the responsibility that provides advice and consent on nominations and certainly on what is probably the most significant and important nomination—that of an individual to the Supreme Court of the United States.

To summarize, the Constitution lays out the job before us. The American citizens expect us to do our jobs. Let’s do our job.

**GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD**

Mr. President, I am going to shift gears here to discuss a bill that has recently come out of committee and the way that we should consider responding to it. This conversation is all about defending Americans’ right to know what is in the food they feed to their family and they feed to their children. I will also discuss the legislation I am putting forward to attempt to be a bridge between some very different visions on that topic.

Let me start by saying this is all about genetically modified food and the information provided to citizens on the package about that. This often turns into a debate: Well, GMO has done some wonderful things over here. Others say: Well, it has created some problems over here.

I am going to acknowledge that both of those are true. It has done some very positive things, and I will mention some in specific. But it has also created some challenges, some problems, and I will mention some of those. But after we recognize that is the case, where do we come back to? Here is where we come back to: We should enable people in our country and our nation to make the decision and not have Big Government make the decision or suppress information. That is what happens in the non—“we the people” world. That is what happens in dictatorships. That is not what should happen here in the United States of America, where individuals have the right to know what is in their food.

Let me go ahead and explain some of the benefits and some of the challenges. Let’s start with the example of golden rice. Golden rice was developed by the International Rice Research Institute. It provides greater amounts of vitamin A in the rice to reduce the deficiency that exists in many diets around this planet for that essential vitamin.

That is a pretty positive development. I don’t know at this point of any side effects or other things that have been brought to light. Nature is complicated, but for now, let’s recognize that vitamin A where it is needed is a pretty positive thing.

Let’s take a look at carrots. Carrot cells have been transgenically modified to produce a chemical that treats Gaucher’s disease. Gaucher’s disease is a metabolic disorder where people lack a specific enzyme which helps rid the body of certain fatty substances. Those fatty substances then accumulate, causing enlarged livers, spleens, bone deformities, and anemia. These transgenic carrots are part of the answer, part of the solution.

Let’s turn to sweet potatoes. Researchers are genetically modifying sweet potatoes and multiple viral infections commonly encountered in South Africa, making this a much more successful crop and providing more food to people who need more food. So that is a positive development.

All of this is not a one-sided scientific picture. There are also scientifically documented concerns. We can call them scientifically documented problems that have occurred with transgenic crops.

Let me start by noting that the most common transgenic crops in America are crops that have been modified to be resistant to glyphosate. That is an herbicide. After the introduction of these resistant crops, which means you can put more herbicides or weed killers—so you put one on first and the other on the acreage—you basically knock out the weeds much more easily and less expensively than with other strategies. What happened? Well, basically, since 1994—early 1990s, several major pests have increased almost 100 percent—transgenic-glyphosate tolerant. The amount of glyphosate put on the crops has grown from 7.4 million pounds in 1994—let’s round it off—to 160 million pounds in 2012, and the number keeps climbing. This is a huge amount of herbicide. Try to picture in your head 160 million pounds of herbicide. Well, it is so effective in killing everything except the GM corn, GM soybeans, and GM sugar beets. It is so effective in killing everything else that very few weeds survive. One of the weeds that doesn’t survive, because most don’t, is milkweed. Milkweed happens to be the food for the monarch butterfly. As we have seen the enormous increase of glyphosate applied to our fields, we have seen a crashing of the monarch butterfly ecology. It is not the only thing affecting the monarch. Several other things are affecting them as well, but it is—in scientific study after study—a very significant factor.

Let’s also call something else; that is, that all of this glyphosate doesn’t stay on the fields. When it rains, it gets washed into our waterways. Our waterways are full of things that are affected by our herbicides, and so it has a big impact on the ecology of our streams and rivers. That is a serious scientifically documented issue that we are continuing to learn more about as time passes.

Let’s turn to another issue. This is a fascinating story. It is about a pest that bores into the roots of corn. It is called the corn rootworm. The corn was modified so it would have a pesticide in the cells and would kill the rootworm when it bored into the corn, but guess what happened. If you do this on a vast scale, Mother Nature comes along and has a few genetic mutations here and there and suddenly that rootworm starts to propagate with other pests that are now resistant to the pesticide that has been put into the roots. So now more pesticide has to be added to the corn, and as a result of that we have an opposite outcome than what was expected.

The hope was that this would reduce pesticides, but now you have to put the pesticides back in it, and so now we have the evolution of superbugs. Here we have the adult beetle, and the rootworm is a reference to the larvae stage of this beetle. These are the type of concerns that are raised.

I say all of this just to explain that while there are benefits of transgenic crops, there are also issues that are raised in the natural world. So anyone who says that genetics are wonderful and nobody should be concerned about bioengineered crops is simply refusing to look at the scientific literature that says, no, there are things we should be concerned about. That is why it comes back to the right thing to do is that citizens—Americans, we want to know what is in their food. They want to know if it is a transgenic crop, and they can look up the details and make their own decision. Why have Big Government say that we are going to make decisions for people? They can look up the details and make their own decision. Why have Big Government say that we don’t trust you with information and we are not going to allow you to know what is in your food? No. That should be in some dictatorships, not in the United States of America.

Well, we have a big battle now because out of committee last week has come a bill, and this bill is known as the DARK bill. It stands for Deny Americans the Right to Know because out of committee last week has come a bill, and this whole “we the people” model of a republic. No, we like to have a government that makes decisions for people and that denies information to people because we don’t trust them, as consumers, to decide what they want to eat. We don’t want them to know what they are feeding their children and their family. We want to make the decision for them. Well, 90-plus percent of Americans disagree. They want the information to make the decision on their own. They can find out about the benefits over here. They can find out about the concerns over here. Different foods have different transgenic crops in them. They should get to make the decision and not have Big Government making the decision for them they have the DARK Act, this bill, the DARK Act, prohibits counties, cities, and States from any decision to provide information on package to their citizens about what is in their food regarding transgenic crops.

I got together with the representatives of the food industry and advocates for consumer information. I tried...
to find out if there is an overlap so we can craft a bill that will bring these two communities together, and we made some progress on that, and so I will share that with everyone.

Basically, a big concern of the food industry is legitimate—their argument is, they don’t want 50 different standards in 50 different States or to have a bunch of counties decide to make up their own rules, which would result in hundreds or thousands of rules. If you operate a warehouse, you can’t send different cans of soup to different stores across the country. No. So that makes sense. They want a 50-State solution. Furthermore, they want to have it acknowledged that there is nothing pejorative about the concept of bioengineering or transgenic. They want to know that people know this is a situation where there are some positive benefits, and I have mentioned some of those positive benefits. They don’t want a label on the front of the package because they think it would be scary to consumers, and they want flexibility as to exactly what system they use to alert consumers.

The bill I put forward provides all of those goals for a 50-State solution. There is nothing on the front of the package, nothing pejorative, and provides flexibility for the food industry. It does not go to the final step that much of the food industry wants, which is no unpackaged labeling because then there is no compromise between the two sides.

The consumer side would like to have something mandatory so it is on each package of food. They want it clear so a person can pick up the food or the can or the sack and have it easy to identify on the package. That is the compromise bill I have put forward. It enables the food industry to either put an asterisk on an ingredient that is bioengineered and have it explained below or it enables an industry to put a symbol on it after the ingredient or it enables an industry to just put a symbol on the ingredients panel. In Brazil they use a “t.” It is a very simple “t.” It is not scary, but for those who want to know, it is identified.

This approach of simplicity—nothing scary, simple access that is easy to see—this is the bulk of what both sides want to find out if there is an overlap so we can craft a bill that will bring these two communities together, and we made some progress on that, and so I will share that with everyone.

It has been endorsed by a number of groups. Over the past few days my bill has been endorsed by Amy’s Kitchen and Stoneyfield, and Nature’s Path. It has been endorsed by Campbell’s, the folks who have already signed up to sponsor this bill. Senator LEAHY, Senator TESTER, Senators Feinstein, Senator SANDERS, Senator MURPHY, Senator GILLIBRAND, and Senator BLUMENTHAL... thank you.

I appreciate the folks who have already signed up to sponsor this bill and the_Alliance. I appreciate the folks who have already signed up to sponsor this bill. Senator LEAHY, Senator TESTER, Senators Feinstein, Senator SANDERS, Senator MURPHY, Senator GILLIBRAND, and Senator BLUMENTHAL... thank you.

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Unfortunately, we have not been able to get at this problem. Otherwise, we have people who are users of drugs, it is better to get them into treatment and recovery than just getting them into jail or prison because we have found that hasn’t worked. So the criminal justice system has a role to play here—legalization is not a good idea—but that ought to be, in my opinion, to diverting people into treatment that works better for them to be able to get at this problem. Otherwise, folks will continue to see these incredibly high levels of use, addiction, and all the negative consequences that stem from that.

Today, as we are here in the Senate, on average, we will lose over 100 people a day in the United States of America to deaths from overdoses. Frankly, that is just part of the problem, as horrible as that is. So many people are being saved by this miracle drug called naloxone or Narcan. Also, others who may not be overdosing are not working. Their families are broken apart. They are committing crimes to support their addiction. So many Americans are not achieving their God-given purpose because of this addiction issue that is gripping our country. Our legislation is meant to address it in a very direct way.

The debate on the floor that we had over the past week has been very interesting to me. It is the first time in decades that this Congress has taken up this issue in this manner. We have had a robust debate and policy. What does it mean? I think what you heard Members say on both sides of the aisle is that we have learned a lot about addiction over the years and that addiction now is viewed mostly as a disease, and other illnesses, it needs treatment.

I think that is a very important change in terms of how we address this issue, and the policy before us today on this floor that I hope we will vote on in the next 12 hours or so represents a change in thinking about this, that indeed we want to do everything we can to prevent the addiction in the first place, to keep people out of the funnel of addiction, to have better efforts in education and prevention that is in this legislation. But also, once we have people who are addicted, we need to get them into treatment and recovery more than just getting them into jail or prison because we have found that hasn’t worked. So the criminal justice system has a role to play here—legalization is not a good idea—but that ought to be, in my opinion, to diverting people into treatment that works better for them to be able to get at this problem. Otherwise, folks will continue to see these incredibly high levels of use, addiction, and all the negative consequences that stem from that.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.
works, that is actually going to direct funding to evidence-based programs and prevention and treatment and recovery that work.

We talked a lot to our law enforcement community. That is one reason the Fraternal Order of Police supports our legislation. So does the Sherriff's Association, so do the prosecutors, and so do the attorneys general, because we have actually worked with them to say: How can you be more effective in dealing with this very real problem you have in your community? And let's talk to law enforcement, you talk to firefighters, you talk to emergency medical folks, they will tell you this issue is at the top of their list. They are frustrated by it. They are looking for a solution, and this legislation helps to come up with the solution.

I also thank Senator Ayotte, Senator Klobuchar, and 42 bipartisan co-sponsors for their support of this legislation. It is comprehensive, it is evidence-based, and it is going to make a difference.

Not only has it had a lot of support here in the Senate—and I hope we will see that again in the final vote—but it also has support in the House of Representatives. There was a companion bill at one time that was identical to our legislation, also called CARA, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. Ours has changed a little bit through the process, but it is very similar to the House companion bill. There are over 80 cosponsors to that legislation. It is a bipartisan bill on the House side as well.

So this is one of those issues where if we pass it here in the Senate, we have a very good chance of passing it in the House and getting it to the President for his signature so it can begin to make a difference in our communities.

The reason we are here today talking about this is, again, because so many people are struggling. There are 23 million Americans, it is said—23 million Americans—who are in recovery from addiction. Think about that. We are doing this for them, to ensure that they can have successful recoveries, to help them to ensure that they can keep their lives together and not fall back into this struggle of addiction.

With 23 million people recovering, think of the millions who are still struggling. Together, those who are recovering who was a companion have begun to stand up and let their voices be heard. That is one of the differences I have seen in this debate, is that the stigma that has been associated with addiction has begun to be removed.

There was a rally here on the Capital Mall several months ago. It was called the Unite to Face Addiction rally. There were people there from all over the country. Thousands of people came to Washington—thousands. And the message from them was, one person CARA, this legislation—and I appreciate their help. We wouldn’t be here today on the floor talking about this issue if they hadn’t engaged with their elected representatives in the House and the Senate and our leadership to help us get this moving. Second, there was message was, look, addiction is a disease and it has to be treated like other illnesses, and we have to have legislation on the House floor that is associated with drug addiction so that we can address it and we can begin to get people out of the grip of addiction and get our communities and families out of the grip of addiction. This is a cause, and the enforcement and the criminal justice system, but it also requires love and faith and communities coming together. It is one that we can only carry out together—all of us, not as Republicans or Democrats or Independents but as Americans, as fathers and mothers, family members and friends and coworkers who care about those who are facing this great challenge of addiction.

CARA now has the support of over 130 groups, and these are criminal justice groups. These are people who are in the trenches every day dealing with treatment and prevention. These are folks who are in public health. These are people who are in law enforcement and understand the importance of this. They have all come together to say: Let’s pass this legislation so we can begin to implement this evidence-based program to respond to this epidemic.

It does help prevention and education efforts. It does a lot to get prescription drugs off the shelves and get the medication out of the hands of our youth. It does allow us to monitor drugs. It authorizes law enforcement task forces to combat heroin and methamphetamine in areas that are particularly hard hit. It expands the availability of the miracle drug we talked about earlier—it doesn’t always work, but it has saved a lot of lives—called naloxone or Narcan.

In the criminal justice system, it does identify and treat individuals suffering from substance abuse disorders and expands diversion and education efforts to give those individuals that second chance.

We give special help in this legislation to our veterans. We establish more funds for these veterans treatment courts. I have been to them in Ohio. They are incredible. Yesterday, I talked about one of the veterans who had been in and out of the prison system. Now he not only has his life back together, he has his family back together. He is back in school getting a degree. He is one example of many who got off track because of PTSD, because of an addiction, used self-medication to deal with his PTSD was in the prison system and is now back out. We are supporting that effort.

We do help women who are postpartum and suffer from addiction. We do help babies who are born addicted. We have this incredible situation where in Ohio we now have a 750-percent increase in the number of babies who are born with this syndrome—with addiction. They have to be taken through withdrawal. I have gone to these neonatal units with my wife, and we have seen these incredibly compassionate doctors and nurses. What I hear from them is, you have to do something. This legislation takes that important step to the Federal level.

CARA supports recovery programs focused on youth and building communities of recovery. It creates a national task force on recovery to get the experts really engaged to help us to improve ways to address some of the collateral consequences caused by addiction.

Economists tell us that addiction now costs this country about $700 billion every year. Think about that. That is lost productivity. That is more expensive health care. If you go to the emergency room in your community to find out what is going on, you will see people overcome by their addiction. This is a lot of money, no doubt, but addiction costs us something else too: It costs us in dreams that are never fulfilled, in families who are torn apart, in lives that are lost. We don’t just measure our success in dollars and cents. We measure it in safer neighborhoods, less crime, in empty jail cells, and by the number of people who never have to struggle with drug abuse in the first place because of more effective prevention and education. We measure it in the moms and dads who beat addictions so they can come back to be with their kids and bring their families back together. We measure it in the families who are not torn apart but instead are healed.

As we move forward to pass this legislation—the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act—our message is a really simple one. To those who struggle with addiction, to those who think they cannot overcome, to those who believe there is no one out there who cares about them or can help them: You are not alone. We are with you. There is hope. I have seen people beat this. I have known people who have beaten this. You can beat this.

And we can be a better partner here at the Federal Government to be able to help people overcome this struggle. We need to pass this bill and get it signed into law to begin to make a real difference for the families we represented.

The House has companion legislation also called CARA. They have a big bipartisan group supporting it. After we pass this legislation here—because I am confident we will pass it in the vote this afternoon—I hope the House will take it up, take up CARA, and get it passed. Let’s get it to the President for his signature, and let’s truly begin to
The Senator from Maryland. Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I am certainly disappointed by the Senator from Texas objecting to the request of the senior Senator from Maryland, Ms. MIKULSKI.

The request of Senator MIKULSKI is for us to consider two article III judges who are next in line for consideration before the U.S. Senate. They have cleared the committee. They have both been approved by the committee by voice vote, a unanimous vote within the Judiciary Committee.

I know Paula Xinis—the vacancy to be filled in Maryland at University Park. She joined the law firm of Murphy, Falcon & Murphy in Baltimore. She is a senior trial attorney, well qualified to take the seat of the former chief justice, Deborah Chasanow. She was appointed by President Obama in March of 2015. We are now approaching the 1-year anniversary of her appointment—1 year anniversary for a noncontroversial, well-qualified person to be confirmed. She should be aware of the facts in regard to filling judicial vacancies.

We have completed the confirmation process on 16 article III judges since the beginning of this term of Congress. This Congress is the last 2 years of a Presidential term where the President was of the Republican Party and the Senate was controlled by the Democrats—just the opposite of what we have today—was the year 2007 and 2008 under President George W. Bush. The Judiciary Committee was chaired by Chairman LEAHY. That year, by March 9, we had cleared and confirmed 40 judicial appointments—40 compared to 16 in this Congress. By the end of the year, we had approved 68 of President Bush’s nominations.

Going back to the other time with a Republican President and with a Democratic majority, the Senate was controlled by the Democrats. In 1987 and 1988, under President Reagan—in 1987 and 1988, under Chairman BIDEN, by March 9 of the last year, the Senate had confirmed 47 of his nominations, compared to 16 this year, and by the end of the year, we had confirmed 85 nominees, including a Supreme Court Justice, Justice Kennedy.

We have pending right now on the floor of the Senate that have cleared committees—every single one by voice vote unanimously—we have 12 article III judges who are ready for action and 5 other judicial appointments, for a total of 17. But that is not the whole story. We have 25 nominees who are still pending before the Judiciary Committee, including Stephanie Gallagher from our own State of Maryland, to fill a vacancy. This is not the only vacancy we have in Maryland on the bench and we have two in Maryland waiting for action by the U.S. Senate.

So there is a matter of fairness here. There is also a matter of respect for the judicial branch of government in allowing the courts to be able to function.

The district court is where most individuals get their justice. That is the trial court. That is the court where our citizens get their judicial relief. We have vacancies where appointments have been made that are noncontroversial, well-qualified people, and we can't get a vote on the floor of the U.S. Senate? My friend from Texas tells me this is the prerogative of the majority leader. It is their responsibility to act on these nominations.

Senator MIKULSKI has set up a process in Maryland where we take an interview process to get the very best talent to serve on our courts. I am honored to work with her as we go through the process of finding the very best to serve on the courts. How do you expect to allow their name to come forward when it takes a year to consider a nomination? If you want to get the very best people to be able to act, and we have to be responsible.

Let me just say something. We have to take up these nominations. I appreciate that we always have a lot of work that we have to do. We have time today to act on these nominations. Ms. MIKULSKI should call on the majority leader and I call on my friends to say: Look, let’s get our court vacancies filled. Let’s carry out our responsibility and vote on these nominations.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, why am I here today on the floor asking for these two nominations to be confirmed? They are the next two judges in line on the Executive Calendar for our Federal district courts: Waverly Crenshaw, Jr., a highly qualified and talented nominee from the great State of Tennessee; and Paula Xinis, nominee from my own State of Maryland.

Both Mr. Crenshaw and Ms. Xinis have been waiting for months to have their day and get their vote. Mr. Crenshaw has been waiting since July, Ms. Xinis since September. I think 6 months is enough time to provide our advice and evaluate these nominees. It is time to do our jobs and give these candidates a vote. I urge the Republicans to allow these nominations to move forward.

We are easily on pace to be the least productive Senate in recent history. Last year Republicans confirmed the fewest judges in almost 50 years: a total of 11 in 2015. Since Republicans took over the Senate the number of judicial emergencies has nearly tripled, which leaves courts overworked and understaffed.

Now some Republicans say there is precedent for their obstructionism. Some Republican Senators have tried to fudge their numbers, saying the judges confirmed during our lameduck session at the end of 2014 should count toward their abysmal numbers for 2015. Well, what about those numbers? I didn’t realize that’s how the Senate
I also want to add that I am really frustrated. I am so frustrated that No. 1, President Obama doesn’t get to be President Obama. His job as President is to nominate competent people for an independent branch of government, the Federal judiciary. He did his job. Then it came to the Senate. When we are done here, and we are, Mr. President, I think we ought to do what is necessary to get this done. We need to be able to make sure that the people are willing to serve and they have the credentials, the judicial temperament, and the character to serve. We need to be able to at least give them a vote. Now, if you don’t like the Obama nominees, vote them down. Vote them down, but don’t slow down the process.

We have a constitutionally mandated process. Let’s follow it. Let’s do our job. We have Mr. Crenshaw and Ms. Xinis. We are happy to have Mr. Crenshaw go first, but we sure would like a date for Ms. Xinis.

We call out to our colleagues to give us a date, give us a vote. Give it to us now.

Mr. CARDIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be reconsidered.

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

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate as in morning business.

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

The Senator from Arizona.

OMNIBUS AND DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, last night we saw another unusual election result. We see a “businessman” now in a very significant lead for the nomination of the Republican Party, the party of Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan.

As I watched the postmortems last night and this morning, we see again that many of those who voted cite as one of their primary—if not the primary—reasons dissatisfaction and frustration about Washington, DC, specifically the Congress of the United States, as well as the President. They believe they need somebody who is an outsider, someone who is not “of the establishment.” I guess that applies to anyone who is in elected office.

Some of us have been surprised. Certainly no one predicted these outcomes, not only on the Republican side but on the Democratic side. We saw our colleague from Vermont engineer quite a stunning upset in the State of Michigan last night. But he also—even though a Member of the Senate, Senator SANDERS clearly is speaking in opposition to the machine, the business as usual in Washington.

Sometimes we ask ourselves why the American people give us such a low approval rating. I see polls that show that the approval rating of Congress is 12 percent, 13 percent, 14 percent, sometimes as high as 15 percent. I would inform anyone who listens that it wasn’t always like that. We didn’t always have such a low approval rating in the Congress by the American people.
I think it is worthy of note that in the last year since regaining the majority, we have enacted some legislation that I think we could be proud to go back and talk to our constituents about, whether it be education reform, whether it be defense authorization, or whether it be a highway bill that was much needed to provide infrastructure for our States, counties, and towns. We passed a budget. We passed a defense authorization bill that has some of the most significant reforms in history. But the fact is, those numbers haven’t changed, and they haven’t changed sometimes for good reason.

That is why I come to the floor today, because I am ashamed and embarrassed, as a representative of the people of my State, to talk about billions of dollars of unnecessary wasteful spending of their taxpayer dollars, and it happened on the Omnibus appropriations bill—omnibus. A lot of my constituents don’t know what “omnibus” means is, we are required to take up 15 appropriations bills. We don’t do it—and I would put the responsibility for that on the other side of the aisle, but it doesn’t matter, really, because we end up, at the end of the year, with this massive, humungous bill that is about this high, that none of us have seen or read and there is no amendment to it, and we have approximately 48 to 72 hours in which to vote yes or no, with the option being the government not continuing. That is not the way to do business. That doesn’t inspire any confidence in us on the part of the American people, and it is disgraceful.

So the omnibus, again, was passed with votes from both sides, actually, but the fact is that our responsibility was to take up these bills one by one, to examine them, to have amendments, and to have the Congress—in this case, the Senate—work its will. We didn’t do that.

Here it was. We walked in, and here was this bill—not that size but this size—that no one had read, no one had a chance to peruse, and even if we had, we couldn’t do anything about it because the bill was not amendable because if we amend it, then it bounces back to the other side of the Capitol, and we run out of time, and the government shuts down. That is the wrong way to do legislation.

One of the major reasons for what happened is it is open to incredible abuse. I came to the floor today to talk about the abuse of the most sacred responsibility we have, which is the defense of this Nation.

I am proud to be chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, a position I aspired to for many years. We work hard in the Senate Armed Services Committee. We work on a bipartisan basis. We have hearings, we examine the issues, and we examine the programs. We are talking about, again, hundreds of billions of dollars, of taxpayers’ dollars, whether it be pay and benefits for the men and women who are serving or whether it be the equipment they need or many of the policies that govern the defense of this Nation. And I am proud of the work we do.

So after producing a bill with an overwhelming majority vote—90-some votes—with the authorization for all of this to do with our Nation’s defense, the Appropriations Committee decides to overrule what we have authorized, in violation of the way the Senate is supposed to function but in violation of a resolution adopted by the Republican conference, which I will read:

**Earmark Moratorium**

Resolved, that it is the policy of the Republican Conference that no Member shall request a congressionally directed spending item, limited tax benefit, or limited tariff benefit, as such items are used. . . .

Et cetera.

So what was in this omnibus bill? Let me give you the best example: $225 million for a ship called a joint high-speed vessel, for a ship the Navy did not want. No one asked for this.

We had hearings in the Armed Services Committee on shipbuilding. We examined all of the proposals. Some of them we didn’t accept. Others we did. Others, through votes in the committee, debate, and discussion, came up with our shipbuilding authorization. So what was in this Omnibus appropriations bill by the Appropriations Committee? For the second year in a row, $225 million the Navy did not request and did not need.

By the way, my friends, I would not take too much time in the Senate, but building a ship is just the beginning of the expense. You have to man it, you have to put the ammunition on it, you have to put the equipment on it, and you have to operate it for as long as 30 years and you don’t want it. The Navy has lots of unmet military requirements. So what was put in there and why? Because, frankly—and I use these words without reservation—it is made in Mobile, AL. It is made in Mobile, AL. It is blantant. It is blantant. And then, of course, there were so many other items in it.

It is like any other evil. First you condemn things. Then you condone them. Then you embrace them. There is no better example of that than the so-called money for “medical research.” In fact, years ago somebody decided: Hey, we will spend some money for medical research on some of the illnesses that affect the men and women in the military. I don’t take exception to that. But it grew and grew and grew and grew.

Now, in this bill, $1.2 billion extra—not million but billion dollars—is asked for. Let me give examples: $120 million for breast cancer; $12 million for Multiple Sclerosis; $20 million for ovarian cancer; $7.5 million for epilepsy; $12.9 million for HIV/AIDS. My friends, all of those are worthy causes. All of those should probably be funded.

We should do all those things, but not on the Defense bill. It was not authorized and was jammed in for the Willy Sutton syndrome. The Willy Sutton syndrome is about a bank robber who, when asked why he robbed banks, said: That is where the money is. Well, the defense appropriations is where the money is. So here we have over the last 23 years, as it has grown and grown and grown, just $2.4 billion of the $10 billion spent on these congressionally directed medical research programs being relevant to the military. In other words, $7 billion went to research things such as osteoporosis and mad cow disease instead of training, equipment, and care for our troops and their families.

We do not have enough money to care for the men and women in the military and to tell them to spend certain money on certain projects. We don’t have enough money for that as a result of sequestration. So what did they do? They put in $1.2 billion more in medical research.

Here are a few more examples. There is an additional $7 million in funding for a machine gun. These guns are made with a 500-percent increase. There is $750 million for a National Guard Reserve equipment enhancement and $600 million in additional funding for DOD’s science and technology budget.

This is very interesting, my friends, this science and technology budget. Here is what happens. They put out $600 million, and it is supposed to be for “scientific and technology research.” But it doesn’t say for what specific item. So what happens is the members of the Appropriations Committee then write to the Department of Defense and tell them to spend certain money on certain projects. That is the way of getting around the letter of the earmark ban if not the spirit of it.

Then, of course, there is the Russian rocket engines. Today we are seeing for space launches Russian rocket engines. The company that makes these Russian rocket engines happens to be run by cronies of Vladimir Putin. In fact, two of the cronies of Vladimir Putin are such thugs and gangsters that they have been on our sanctions list. We have sanctioned them. Yet our friends on the Appropriations Committee, again, with ULA—the people who are buying these rocket engines—are based in Alabama, of course, headquartered in Chicago, IL. The engines, as I mentioned, are manufactured by this Russian company that is controlled by a guy name Chemezov and a guy named Rogozin, who have been sanctioned. It amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars to them.

What we did was we restricted the cost and encouraged the competition, and we had hearings on it. It was a big issue. We had votes in the committee on it, we discussed it and we debated it. And so what did the appropriators do? They put a provision into this bill reversing what we authorizers did. That
is in complete violation of the rules of the Republican conference.

So I have talked very often with our twelve freshmen. I can't be more proud of what these freshmen Senators have brought to this conference. They have brought enthusiasm, they have brought knowledge, they have brought youth, they have brought military experience—people like Senator Ernst and Senator Cotton and others who bring their military experience. I am so proud to have many of them serving on the Armed Services Committee. I have asked them to get together and condemn this. I campaigned for almost all of them. They promised the people of their States, as I promised the people of my State, that I wouldn't allow this waste of billions of their tax dollars, that I would fight against it. So I am asking our freshmen Senators to join together—and I hope they will because I have had conversations with them—to reject this, and, if we go into another appropriations omnibus, that they will not allow this to happen.

Why did I focus my comments on defense? It is for two reasons. No. 1 is obvious. I am chairman of the Committee on Armed Services. So I take strong exception when the men and women who are serving in the military are having to leave the military involuntarily because we don't have enough money, yet they are wasting billions—billions—of taxpayer dollars. Second of all, it is not right. It is not right. And thirdly, we believe—we authorized our bill and our bill is passed by the Senate and the House, for 53 straight years, and signed by the President of the United States.

This bill is important to defend the Nation. When our careful deliberations, our votes, our hearings, our debates day after day on the floor of the Senate as we consider the authorization bill is then overturned—overturned—and pork barrel projects such as a $225 million exercise at the Navy headquarters, with needs nor wants added to it, then, my friends, do not be surprised when we have an approval rating of 12 or 13 or 14 percent.

The American people are smart. Our constituents are smart. When they see billions of dollars wasted in this fashion, it is no wonder we receive their condemnation and their sarcasm and their disapproval.

So I am addressing my freshmen colleagues to take the lead—to take the lead because they are the ones who are closest to the people—and to help me reject this corrupt process. And it is corrupt.

I want to also assure all of my colleagues that if they try this again—if they try this again—I will do everything in my power—everything in my power—to make sure it is reversed or that it never happens to start with. We owe the American people much better than the process I just described.

Mr. President, I note the presence of the senior Senator from Texas, and I yield the floor.
There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

MARCH 2, 2016.

Hon. JOHN CORNYN,

Chair, Senate Office Building,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Cornyn, On behalf of the undersigned mental health, substance abuse and co-occurring disorders organizations, we are writing to express our support of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Act amendments to the Affordable Care Act (MARC).

Approximately 65% of individuals incarcerated in jails and prisons across the United States have substance abuse disorders. Many of these individuals have co-occurring mental illnesses, and substance use and abuse disorders have proven challenging. This has been true as well with specialty courts established to address the unique needs of violent offenders with substance use disorders (drug courts) or mental health (mental health courts). Drug courts have frequently not been equipped to address the needs of people with mental illness and mental health courts have frequently not been equipped to address the needs of people with substance abuse disorders or challenges.

The provisions included in the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Amendments would be helpful in addressing these problems.

Section 802 would add “mental health treatment and transitional services for those with mental illnesses or with co-occurring disorders” among those prioritized for assistance when transitioning out of criminal justice systems.

Section 803 would include “training for drug court personnel . . . on identifying and addressing co-occurring substance abuse and mental health problems” to federal criminal justice training priorities.

Section 804 would add grants for developing and implementing specialized treatment programs that “provide appropriate treatment to inmates with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders or challenges.”

Inclusion of these provisions in MARC would be very helpful in fostering positive treatment outcomes and in reducing recidivism for offenders with mental illness and substance use disorders.

Senator Cornyn, we greatly appreciate your work on these issues and stand ready to help in any way we can to move them forward.

Please contact Ron Honberg with NAMI with any questions or if we can provide further support.

Sincerely,

CALLING FOR APPOINTMENT OF A SPECIAL COUNSEL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, separately, earlier this morning I joined my colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee to hear testimony from the Attorney General of the United States, Loretta Lynch.

As a former attorney general of my State, I have always taken a great interest in the level of crime at the State level and now certainly at the national level, and I have tried to do everything I can to help strengthen the rule of law and help keep the American people safe, and that includes transparent justice systems.

I spent a little bit of time asking the Attorney General this morning about her Department’s investigation into the former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and her use of a private email server during her tenure. I have talked many times on the floor about my concerns surrounding her use of an unsecured email server. The former Secretary did refuse to use the government server and decided to basically play by her own rules, setting up a secured email server for herself and her staff in her capacity as Secretary of State.

Several experts from the intelligence community have outlined how her unsecured server left her emails—some highly sensitive—vulnerable to hacking and in ranging cyber attacks. This is a very serious matter.

Last fall, about 6 months ago, I asked the Attorney General to appoint a special counsel to fairly and fully conduct an investigation. That is because Secretary Clinton is not just a random citizen or former government employee; her case is awfully high-profile. As a result, I think there are many questioning whether she is being treated in exactly the same way as any other citizen would be treated under similar circumstances or whether she is getting some sort of preferential treatment.

Because the Attorney General is a political appointee of the President of the United States, and given Clinton’s high profile, there are real conflicts of interest and real concerns about politics ahead of justice. Those could be addressed and mitigated by providing a special counsel, as the law provides, to provide some measure of independence from the Attorney General so the public can have confidence that this case is being treated just like every other case and not with some sort of political favoritism based on a conflict of interest.

This morning, I questioned the Attorney General about recent reports that the Department has granted immunity to the staffer who set up Secretary Clinton’s private server.

So anybody listening understands, the only reason immunity would be granted in a criminal investigation is if somebody invokes their Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination. But if given immunity, then the individual may cooperate with law enforcement authorities and cannot refuse to answer questions because they no longer have any likelihood or any chance of being convicted of that crime, having been granted immunity.

This does indicate that this investigation has taken on a new level of seriousness, and I suspect the FBI continues to be hard at work trying to get to the bottom of this, as I would expect them to do. I hope this indicates that the Department of Justice is treating this case with the great care and gravity it requires. They are integral to this grant of immunity because the FBI can’t do this on their own, and it takes the prosecutions of the Department of Justice to agree to a grant of immunity as part of an investigation.

I still believe the American people deserve an independent investigation, and I will continue to press for the appointment of a special counsel to that end.

MENTAL HEALTH REFORM LEGISLATION

Finally, Mr. President, I want to address another issue I questioned the Attorney General about, and that is the needed reforms to the mental health system. I believe I repeated to her today—I have repeated this story so many times, I sometimes forget when I have said it before. But I recently had a chance to meet with a number of major county sheriffs, and somebody asked me: Would you like to meet the largest mental health provider in America?

I said: Well, sure.

He said: Well, he is over here. It is the sheriff of Los Angeles County.

So the fact is, many people incarcerated in our jails are suffering from mental illness, and they may have committed petty crimes, such as trespassing and the like, but they are not getting their condition treated as long as they are warehoused in jails. Many communities, such as my hometown of San Antonio, TX, have created a model of how to divert people from jail to get their mental health issues treated and address the same time make sure we don’t continue this turnstile of people coming in and out of our jails when their underlying mental illness problems are not being treated.

I asked her to take a look at a bill I introduced, the Mental Health and Safe Communities Act, which is designed to help communities and families who are struggling to help their loved ones who are mentally ill. Many families don’t have access to adequate treatment or lack the resources to comply with doctors’ orders.

The facts is, back in the nineties, back when a major policy change was made in America and people were essentially turned out of institutions where they sometimes were treated, there wasn’t any follow-up to make sure there was some sort of safety net or some follow-on treatment to make sure their needs were taken care of.

Today, any of us who have walked down the street in a major American city know we have homeless people living on our streets who are essentially suffering from some form or another of mental illness, and their
needs are not being addressed. Some of them, perhaps because they abused alcohol or other drugs in order to try to medicate or take care of their problems on their own, end up committing crimes of one type or another, not necessarily what I would call a serious crime. There are some who do not fully appreciate the meaningfulness of this opening to Cuba. They maintain that we have somehow offered concessions to the Cuban Government without benefit to the United States or to the Cuban people. Some contend that we have moved prematurely when human rights issues remain unresolved in Cuba.

To be clear, human rights abuses persist in Cuba. We all seek to remediate these abuses. Yet extending 50 years as the Cuban Government’s convenient scapegoat for the failure of socialism is unlikely to yield gains in human rights in the future any more than our policies have done in the past. Instead, this generation of Cubans can take advantage of the opportunities presented by the failures of socialism. Recognizing the inherent right of Americans to travel to Cuba isn’t a concession to dictators. It is an expression of freedom. It is America’s privileges for our travel ban, not the Cuban Government.

During my first visit to Cuba in 2001, I told the Cuban Foreign Minister in a meeting in Havana that I was attempting to lift the U.S. travel ban. I added, if the Cuban Government didn’t improve its human rights effort, I would seek to lift the entire trade embargo. It was taken as an attempt at humor, of course, but for me it was no joke. I have always believed that denying Americans the ability to travel to and trade with Cuba has done more to extend dictatorial rule on that island than any other policy we could have adopted.

For far too long U.S. administrations, both Republican and Democratic, have insisted that U.S. measures, such as ending the travel ban or easing the trade embargo, must be met by moves by the Cuban Government to improve the human rights condition of the citizenry. I understand this instinct, but I will submit that ending the travel ban and easing the trade embargo, even when done unilaterally, leads to better human rights conditions in Cuba.

Milton Friedman wrote that economic freedom is “an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom.” Far from being concessions to dictators, changes in our policy toward Cuba are reinforcing and advancing opportunities for Cubans in the private sector. Citizens who are totally dependent on government for their livelihood are subject to the whims of all-powerful leaders in a way that those who are economically independent are not.

In a very real sense in Cuba, the economic agenda is the human rights agenda. Recognizing its precarious economic position in recent years, the cash-strapped Castro regime has laid off thousands of government workers and expanded legal opportunities in the private sector. This has given way to a dramatic rise in the number of entrepreneurs on the island who are running restaurants, bed and breakfasts, taxi services, salons, and much more. In fact, it is estimated that as many as one-third of Cuba’s 5 million workers are now operating in Cuba’s private sector. This exponential expansion of Cuba’s entrepreneurial class would not have happened were it not for U.S. policy changes in 2009 that has led to an explosion of travel and remittances among Cuban Americans. Some suggest that remittances to the island are responsible for 70 to 80 percent of the capital used in small businesses in Cuba.

Recent changes to U.S. regulations allowing for additional travel and remittances have further expedited the expansion of the private sector in Cuba. Other changes have come about simply as the result of U.S. policy changes, such as allowing the so-called people-to-people exchanges to be conducted on an individual as opposed to a group basis, would propel this movement even further. Again, this entrepreneurial expansion in Cuba has not only given scores of Cubans a better quality of life, it has lessened their dependence on the Cuban Government in a way that has improved their human rights condition.

The recent bilateral air service agreement also represents a key piece to ensuring the continued travel of Americans to the island. This agreement will, for the first time in 50 years, provide scheduled air service between the United States and Cuba. Frequent and regular travel between the two countries will continue to open economic ties, and it will lead to private sector economic opportunities on the island.

I should note that the administration has come just about all that its authority permits to affect change on the island. In the coming months, it will be up to Congress to take the next steps. I hope that we—particularly those of us on this side of the aisle who believe so strongly in the value of free markets and free enterprise—will remember these principles as we promote democracy and human rights in Cuba.

Margaret Thatcher famously said: “There can be no liberty unless there is economic liberty.” This statement is as true in Cuba as it is anywhere in the world. It is my hope that this principle will guide our actions as we endeavor to promote freedom and liberty in Cuba.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

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. FLAKE. 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 this afternoon on the floor to join with colleagues as we discuss the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016. I would suggest that from the perspective of families across the country, many would look at this and say this is probably one of the more important pieces of legislation that this Senate could be taking up this year.

If we think about this crisis, this epidemic that we are seeing across the country with opioid addiction, it is probably one of the most pressing public health issues facing American families all across the country. As we have heard from colleagues, this is not just one single State’s issue. This is not just one region of the country. This is across all 50 States. I always like to think that in Alaska, because we are so far away, we are so remote, perhaps we might be insulated from some of the negative aspects of this modern society. In fact, we cannot isolate, we cannot insulate ourselves from the scourge of the drugs and the drug addiction we are seeing.

This addiction does not discriminate. It doesn’t discriminate against any demographic, any group. Again, it can’t be confined to a single geographic region. It impacts young people. It impacts our older people, the lower income, middle-income, and the higher income levels. Those of us who have served our Nation as our honored veterans, pregnant women, and even newborn babies can suffer from addiction.

The stories we hear when we are back home visiting with our constituents, talking with friends, talking with neighbors, and then hearing these stories recounted on the floor—these are heartbreaking stories that come from all over the country, from the east coast, again, all the way to the most remote villages of Alaska. We have seen and we have heard the pain that opioid addiction causes. It is important that we take action and that we address this issue now before it worsens. Unfortunately, as we see the statistics, that is where it is going, that is the trend, and that is the direction.

The rates of addiction and hospitalization will only continue to skyrocket. We cannot throttle this back, unless we can get our hands around it. This is our opportunity not only to treat but to prevent opioid addiction. Lots of numbers have been discussed on the floor about this epidemic that we are seeing, and the numbers really are horrifying. In Alaska, the mortality rates related to opioid and heroin abuse have more than tripled since 2008. In 2015, we had 33 Alaskans die from heroin overdose—perhaps even more than we have just haven’t been able to identify. There is also hospitalization for heroin and opioid poisoning have nearly doubled since 2008. The cost is over millions of dollars.

As we know, it is often our young people who suffer from addiction the most, and certainly the most directly. Between 2008 and 2013, the rate of individuals between 21 and 29 years old being admitted to treatment centers as a result of opioids was up 22 percent. Again, we are talking about numbers, and we are talking about statistics. But we are really not. We are talking about our friends, we are talking about family, and we are talking about neighbors. But we can make a difference if we provide the resources and if we provide the education and the outreach, not just to young people but to all, so that they understand the dangers of opioid addiction.

Unfortunately, some of what we have seen with this addiction is that somehow or another, opioids are viewed as less a health threat because they are prescription. What CARA does, what this legislation in front of us does, is to help address the educational need, provide States and communities with the funding they need to ensure that all in the community—the educators, the parents, the doctors, other members of the community—have the knowledge and have the tools they need to guide and support young people during this time. And they have to 

But it is just so hard; it has been so hard to see families and friends lose their loved ones to addiction.

Over the past several months in the community of Juneau, our State capital, there have been a series of newspaper articles that have chronicled how that community has been impacted by the loss of young people due to heroin. Six young people, all under the age of 30, were lost last year. In September, a young man who was a softball player lost his life due to heroin overdose. Two weeks after that, another family lost a son who was going to film school.

You read the stories, you read the details about the lives of these young people, who could be like any of us until something happens. And what that something is is an exposure to opioids and an addiction that, again, cuts a life short. Those parents of these young people, as parents in States all across the Nation, know that for a fact, but how is it that we can help these families, these communities, as they deal with, again, this scourge that has afflicted so many?

We have had some good news in the State of Alaska. Just this week, the Alaska State House of Representatives passed a bill that will remove civil liabilities for providing or administering the drug naloxone to treat opioid and heroin overdose. It was actually the representative from Juneau, Representative Munoz, who spoke to the need for reform and helped lead this important measure. That is on its way to the Governor’s desk. Again, I think it is an important option for lifesaving treatment.

As we work together—those of us who have cosponsored the CARA bill and all who have expressed their concern—we know we need to keep the pressure on. We need to keep the momentum up to address this, not only in Alaska but around the country, to fight back, to deal with this addiction we are seeing, and to really attack the issue from every degree. From mental health to criminal justice reform, community programs, educational resources, tools for veterans and pregnant women, addressing this widespread issue with a widespread response is important.

I thank my colleagues who have led on this issue, and the Presiding Officer here today has clearly done just that. I thank the Presiding Officer for his leadership on this.

As I have spoken this afternoon on opioid addiction, and perhaps more specifically to heroin addiction, I always
feel compelled to mention that in my State, and particularly in Anchorage, we have seen a spike of “spice” abuse. This is a synthetic marijuana. More and more, we are seeing individuals who are being sent to the hospital. It is our firefighters who seemingly are responding to more and more heroin incidents than they are responding to fire calls. Recognizing that it is not just heroin, but it is other drugs that are truly wreaking havoc on our families and our communities, we need to unite and make a difference.

So I think what we are doing here in this body is a first step. Passing this legislation is an important response, and through what we are doing, we can work to change the direction in which, unfortunately, we have been going.

With that, I yield the floor.

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

VOTES CAST

Mrs. McCASKILL. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for today’s cloture vote on S. 524, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2015. I would have voted yea.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, today marks the 36th edition of my “Waste of the Week.” For those who have been listening I have been down here every week, while the Senate is in session, addressing what has been documented as waste, fraud, and abuse.

I took on a major role when first coming back to the Senate starting in 2011 to deal with the larger issue of our plunge into debt through deficit spending year after year after year. Despite numerous attempts, many of them bipartisan, all blocked by decisions made at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, we have not been able to put in place a reasonable plan—or any plan whatsoever—that would reduce our spending, balance the budget and begin to chip away at the growing cesspool of debt. It is hurting our economy, and laying a burden on future generations that will have enormous negative consequences.

Given the fact that those larger efforts came to naught, I have decided to start chipping away from the other end of the fiscal spectrum to identify waste, fraud, and abuse, a much more efficient, effective Federal Government and not waste taxpayer dollars that these days are hard-earned and pretty scarce.

This “Waste of the Week” deals with not as substantive an issue as many of these. The speeches talk about a whole range of issues that are taking a lot of taxpayer dollars out of the purses and wallets of our constituents, sent to Washington and simply wasted.

Every once in a while I try to present something that is so ridiculous, so unnecessary, that it catches the public’s attention. This is clearly one of those things. I hope this embarrassment to every Member of this body. Some arguments can be made about, well, perhaps the Social Security Disability Trust Fund could be adjusted so we wouldn’t do this or that. But every fourth or fifth year we throw a pin into a voodoo doll. We spend $331,000 grant for the study on married couples. Listen, you can’t make this stuff up. They came up with the idea of giving each spouse a voodoo doll, and if they felt they were angry, they were to take a pin and stick it into the voodoo doll. They each had their own voodoo doll. This makes this stuff up. It only cost $331,000.

So whenever a spouse made the other spouse angry, the other spouse grabbed the voodoo doll and grabbed a pin and stuck it in. The conclusion was after a 3-year study they discovered—yup, we proved it. “Hangry” occurs when you are hungry.

There are some Senate pages who are trying to hold back their laughter. I see a lot of smiles on the faces of people in this Chamber saying: Surely, this can’t be true. Surely, this is made up. Surely, this is a spoof to try to prove a point. This actually happened, folks. This actually happened.

The serious part of this is that the tax payers paid for it. At a time when we are trying to repair roads and bridges, when we are trying to put money forward for health care research, when we are dealing with terrorist issues to make sure our national security is functioning properly when our military is under-funded, when we are trying to deal with all the issues of the day, we are taking this money—and of all things the National Science Foundation could do, they do this. We take the $331,000 and add it to our ever-growing accumulation of documented waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer dollars. We have now risen to a position of $157,591 million and change. It is not small stuff. It adds up. This is what your Federal Government is doing, and we wonder why the American people are frustrated. We wonder why they are angry when they hear issues like this.

I am not trying to stoke the flames and make the American people more “hangry.” I am simply trying to expose this so we will be so embarrassed with these kinds of things that people will come down to this Chamber and offer legislation to clean up this stuff. We have already made some progress but we can make more.

MIGRATION CRISIS IN EUROPE

Mr. President, I would like to reserve some time to talk about something that I think is very serious, to discuss an issue that I think has an impact on all of us, particularly our national security.

Last week NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander, Gen. Philip Breedlove, whom I have had the opportunity to talk to a number of times, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee about how he views the threats facing us today and what the most serious threats are to the United States.

Featured among them was a serious migration crisis that is destabilizing our European allies. He said: Europe faces the hard challenge of mass migration spurred by state instability and state collapse. The influx of people is
countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other refugee organizations have denounced this proposal as unworkable and illegal. Some EU countries, such as Hungary, have even promised to veto this scheme.

Without entirely prejudging a proposal still under consideration, I nevertheless have to guess that even if it is accepted and enacted, it is unlikely to address meaningfully the real dimensions of this migration problem. Something else clearly has to be done. The numbers that are coming in show an ever-expanding number of migrants seeking relief by taking treacherous routes—many of them guided by criminal elements—into Europe and the European resistance and the instability all of that has provided.

The draft EU-Turkey agreement does include a commitment to pursue another idea, and that is what I want to talk about on the floor this afternoon. I have long advocated this—preferably in a more workable condition; that is, to create conditions in and near Syria that will permit people to remain there in humane conditions of relative safety near their home country, within their own culture. To my mind these include new razor wire barriers along internal EU borders. They encourage divergent national policies on refugee admissions that make almost a mockery of EU policy consensus or even common efforts.

The EU agreement on common borders—described as the Schengen Agreement of 1985—has been considered the bedrock of European unity. If this fundamental agreement is crushed by the unsustainable weight of hundreds of thousands of migrants, how can the European Union itself be saved? That is the question.

Many of our European friends are asking that question. I was recently in Munich at a security conference, and representatives from all the European nations were there. The No. 1 topic was the flow of migration and the destabilization of Europe and the unity of Europe, nations not abiding by their earlier commitments to receive migrants, nations raising barriers and building walls—whether they are razor wire or concrete walls—around their borders. It is creating a major crisis in Europe.

The political stability and social cohesion of individual European states are clearly under strain. We have seen street riots and police suppression. Growing hostility between citizens and migrant groups is spreading like wildfire. Extremist political groups are feeding on this chaos and further threatening democratic institutions. Even in Germany, an extremist right-wing, basically fascist party has grown its population from zero 4 years ago to 15 percent to 20 percent today, taking over in many places as the third largest party in Germany. We all know that after key state elections this weekend, this may be growing.

The latest EU effort to come to grips with this enormous problem is continuing at a summit meeting this week in Brussels, with attendance by Turkey. The draft agreement on the table shows how desperate the Europeans have become. Without discussing the detailed items here, it is sufficient to note that the central proposition under consideration is this: a convoluted system from Greece back to Turkey in exchange for other migrants to be resettled directly from Turkey to European

Secondly, the U.N. Security Council would have to create a new U.N. protective force, “UNPROFOR” is the term that was used in the Balkans. In the Balkan example, that force was comprised of 40,000 troops from 42 contributing countries. In Syria, I would suggest that such a force should include most NATO countries and especially neighboring Islamic countries. Russia should also be pressed to participate. NATO could take on primary planning and organization tasks.

Mr. President, I have presided a number of times, and when the clerk turns and discusses the timeframe—may I ask whether I am under a time limitation? If so, I ask unanimous consent to extend that for just a few moments.

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

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, as I said, it is obvious that safe areas in Syria would require rigidly enforced no-fly zones authorized by the U.N. Security Council. I suggested that with its planning and leadership capabilities and massive resources, NATO should take on that job, as it did in the Balkans. In this role, too, NATO must work closely with the regional powers in a broad, coordinated effort under NATO leadership.

Fourth, as in Bosnia, the U.N. must mobilize a massive relief effort within Syria led by the UNHCR and similar humanitarian organizations.

The international community must be willing to pay for this important humanitarian effort. We should call for major contributions from the regional states, European countries, and other potential donor countries long committed to the humanitarian crisis.

Dealing with so many refugees in a safe, humane conditions will be expensive, yes, but it cannot be more expensive than the costs already being borne by those destination countries burdened with unprecedented migration.

In the current discussions of Turkey, the EU has offered 6 billion euros to help them deal with refugees, and Turkey has reportedly demanded as much as 20 billion euros. With such sums being proposed—and they almost certainly are underestimates—the costs for caring for these desperate people humanely, in conditions of safety, and
in or near their homeland, are easily justified.

Far greater costs will be incurred if this problem is not dealt with effectively. For example, a collapse of the Schengen system and re-imposition of border controls in European process now underway—costs as much as 1.4 trillion euros over the next 10 years, according to a recent European Commission report. This is the cost in reduced economic outlook for the region, not including the costs for infrastructure collapse if the Schengen system is abandoned.

In returning to where I began, I believe the time has now come for us to press vigorously for the safe-area solution to the migrant crisis. The problem is growing far worse with each passing month. Efforts to identify other solutions have failed, and the safe-area proposal may be the only policy remaining. Those who are discouraged by the admitted obstacles and great difficulties in pursuing this solution must simply be persuaded to take it up with creativity, determination, courage, and leadership.

I believe this proposal directly with Vice President Biden, Secretary of State Kerry, Supreme Allied Commander and NATO Commander General Breedlove, and senior European leaders. The Vice President, based on his own experience with the Balkan wars, agrees that the Bosnia precedent could be a useful guide. The general agrees that there are sufficient resources if there is sufficient political will. The European leaders I have spoken with agree that no other alternative is visible at this time. That they included this idea in the negotiations with Turkey is a positive sign. I intend to keep these discussions going in coming days.

In conclusion, I am under no illusions about how difficult this task would be for either us or our allies. It is an enormous undertaking, and even when it does not address the underlying conflict in Syria, which has so far defined all of our best efforts, it is something we must pursue. However, the continuing flow of millions of refugees and migrants is completely unsustainable, posing serious threats to our European friends and ultimately to us all.

I write this pres for this and talk to European leaders and others in our country to see this as a necessary, viable, and doable solution to a crisis situation that is having enormous impacts on the stability of Europe and even on the United States in terms of this humanitarian crisis.

With that, I thank my colleague for his patience and allowing me to conclude.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am on the floor for the 130th time in my “Time to Wake Up” series urging us to wake up to the threat of climate change here.

Time and time again, peer-reviewed science demonstrates that carbon pollution from burning fossil fuels is causing unprecedented global climate changes. We see the effects already in our farms, our forests, and our fisheries. Yet the Republican-controlled Congress continues to hit the “snooze” button every time an alarm goes off.

Every major city in our country, upon examining the data, says climate change is real and it is caused by our carbon pollution. So do all of our National Laboratories. So do our leading home State universities. The Presiding Officer is from Nebraska, so let me read what the University of Nebraska says on its Web site: “Climate change poses significant risks to Nebraska’s economy, environment, and citizens.”

Another quote: “The magnitude and rapidity of the projected changes in climate are unprecedented.”

The fundamental science of climate change is settled, and the stakes of the climate crisis loom large. In polled, Americans demonstrate they understand the connection between climate change and the role humans play in affecting climate. A recent poll shows that 64 percent of Americans support enacting policies to address climate change and 78 percent of Americans believe Federal Government should do more to address climate change.

In spite of the overwhelming science demonstrating that climate change is real and the growing awareness and determination of the American public to do something about it, Congress continues to prevaricate. The reason is simple: the power and threats of the fossil fuel industry. But is this strategy, the fossil fuel industry strategy of obstruction and denial, actually self-injurious?

Let’s look at coal. The coal industry—longtime provider of inexpensive yet dirty energy—is in economic decline. Between 2008 and 2014, coal production and consumption have decreased by 15 percent and 18 percent respectively. Analyses by the U.S. Energy Information Administration suggest 2015 will be the end of the coal era. Coal is losing its share of the electricity market to natural gas and to wind power. From 2002 to 2012, net generation from coal declined by 22 percent and coal-fired electricity, which just 15 years ago constituted 50 percent of the electricity on the grid, now makes up only 33 percent, roughly, of the total.


The top 5 U.S. coal companies—Peabody Energy, Arch Coal, Cloud Peak Energy, and Alpha Natural Resources—produce approximately half of the domestic volume of coal in this country. In the past 5 years, all four companies’ stock prices have crashed. According to a recent report from the Next Generation Center, a Libertarian-leaning think tank, the combined total revenue of these top producers between 2010 and 2016 declined by approximately 18 percent.

Wall Street giant Goldman Sachs recently delivered more bad news for the global coal market. According to its analysis, “the industry does not receive sufficient investment given its ability of existing assets to satisfy flat demand, so prices will remain under pressure as the deflationary cycle continues.”

The coal industry seems divorced from this reality. Consider what Peabody’s CEO Gregory Boyce argued in his company’s 2014 annual report: “[T]hermal coal consumption from the low-cost U.S. regions . . . is likely to increase 50 to 70 million tons over the next 10 years as many regions recover, demand from other regions is displaced, and expected coal plant retirements are offset by higher plant utilization rates.”

Well, the Energy Information Administration disagrees. Between 2012 and 2018, projected thermal coal demand growth of just 4 million tons between 2012 and 2018. And remember, this was Peabody’s CEO speaking last week. Wyoming’s Star Tribune reported that Peabody Energy, the second largest coal miner in the United States, did in January, Patriot Coal Corporation, Walter Energy, and Alpha Natural Resources have all filed for bankruptcy in the past year.

The fossil fuel strategy of political obstruction for coal is looking more and more like economic suicide.

In some corners, light is dawning. American Power president and CEO Charles Patton told a meeting of energy executives last fall that coal is losing a long-term contest with natural gas and renewables. He said this: “If we believe we can just change administrations and this issue is going to go away, we’re making a terrible mistake.”

Well, what if there is an answer to this terrible mistake that is also an answer to climate change. What if we reduce the amount of carbon pollution we dump into the atmosphere and oceans while helping communities to transition from coal-based economies to clean energy ones, helping coal miners. More and more conservative and libertarian economists are making the case that the coal industry should embrace a fee on carbon.

The idea is simple. You levy a price on the thing you don’t want—carbon pollution—and you use the revenue to pay for things you do want. Greg Ip, chief economics commentator for the Wall Street Journal wrote: “The most reliable way to limit the burning of fossil fuels is to alter market signals so as
to divert demand toward cleaner sources of energy or conservation. We know how to do that: Put a price on carbon dioxide emissions via a tax, or via tradable emission allowances. A market-based system would incentivize the market to find the least economically harmful way to reduce emissions.

Dr. Aparna Mathur of the conservative American Enterprise Institute concludes with a colleague from the Brookings Institution showing a carbon fee could reduce emissions, shore up the country’s fiscal outlook, and play an important role in broader tax reform. Dr. Mathur points out: “We understand better the burden of a carbon tax and how to offset it for low-income households should make us more likely to adopt this policy, not less so.

In fact, even the fossil fuel industry knows a carbon tax is an effective mechanism to help shift toward a low-carbon energy future. Six of the world’s major oil and gas companies, including BP Group and Royal Dutch Shell, wrote the United Nations last summer saying they could take faster climate action if governments work together to put a proper price on the environmental and economic harms of greenhouse gas emissions. Here is what they said:

[Wyden] told governments across the world to provide us with clear, stable, long-term ambitious policy frameworks. We believe that a price on carbon should be a key element of these frameworks.

Harvard Professor N. Gregory Mankiw was chair of the Council of Economic Advisers for President George W. Bush, and he served as an economic adviser to Republican Presidential nominee Mitt Romney. He agrees: “The best way to curb carbon emissions is to put a price on carbon.”

With a robust price on carbon, Congress could help coal mining companies, help coal mine workers, and help States and communities with significant coal mining activity. A carbon fee could be used to help coal companies by supplanting current taxes and fees and funding carbon capture for existing operating coal plants. A carbon fee could help coal workers by retraining them for high-paying jobs and providing pension and health care security not available from bankrupted employers. A carbon fee can provide assistance to coal mining communities to help them transition through all the challenges I have described.

A report by David Bookbinder and David Bailey of the Niskanen Center predicts or they could embrace the coal industry would create major social and economic issues such as deep regional decline. These problems also would allow us to do, the bill would provide $20 billion of flexible annual funding back to the people through their States to be used to help them through this inevitable transition—this inevitable transition.

In coal-heavy States, this money could make the difference for communities that have been reliant on coal jobs.

Arthur Laffer, economic adviser to President Reagan, called our bill a “game-changer.” He quoted my proposal: “I applaud Senator Whitehouse’s efforts to reduce carbon emissions while simultaneously offsetting—through pro-growth marginal tax rate decreases—the harm done to the economy by the carbon tax I introduced my bill to start a conversation with Republicans on how best to design a carbon fee to help the economy. I would welcome the opportunity to sit down with any colleague to discuss ways to improve our proposal.

The coal industry in particular has a clear choice: either to keep fighting climate action, keep obstructing, keep their head in the sand, continue to be truculent and obtuse until they crash into more bankruptcy in that unfettered chaotic decline the Niskanen Center predicts or they could embrace a carbon fee and use it to provide for coal workers, to provide for carbon recovery, and to provide for retirees burdened with unfunded pension obligations.

Mr. President, I have put a ladder into the water, and I urge the coal industry, before it goes under, to grab hold.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, our Nation’s Founders fought the British Empire to create an independent nation governed by laws. They fought so their children could live free from the capricious fiat of a monarchy on the other side of the ocean.

Our Founders learned from the excesses and mistakes of European powers and came together to design a new and a better system of distributed power: a robustly balanced system, one of distributed powers and responsibilities, checks and balances. American schoolchildren learn about the three coequal branches of government and the unique roles they play in maintaining that carefully crafted balance of power.

A strong, independent, and fully functioning judiciary is inseparable from a healthy American democracy. Our Founders wisely reached consensus to create a system wherein the President designates judicial nominees and the Senate provides advice and consent. This prevents undue influence or control by either the White House or the Congress over our Court. Simply put, the Senate has a constitutional duty to provide timely consideration of any President’s Supreme Court nominees.

I would like to focus on three distinct and complementary reasons why we must fulfill this obligation. First, we should examine the ample historical records available to determine the intent of our Nation’s Founders.

Second, we should look at the actual text of the Constitution and the plain meaning of the words in the document we all agree represents the highest law in the land. Finally, we can look at the Senate’s track record and traditions when it comes to considering Supreme Court nominees.

As Senators, we raise our hand and take a solemn oath to defend the Constitution of the United States and faithfully discharge the duties of our office. One of the core constitutionally based duties of serving as a Senator is to advise and consent on Supreme Court nominees, and it is not one we can take lightly.

We are fortunate that many of our Nation’s forefathers were prolific writers. They left us documents that now help us understand the debates and the discussions that led to our current system of government.

Our Nation’s fourth President and the youngest member of the Constitutional Convention, James Madison, kept a record of the debates that occurred during those formative months of our Nation in the summer of 1787. I urge my colleagues to revisit this record as they consider how to proceed with our Nation’s next Supreme Court nominee.

On June 4, 1787, James Wilson of Pennsylvania—a signatory of the Declaration of Independence and a member of the Continental Congress—argued that justices should be appointed by the executive branch alone and strongly opposed appointments made by the Federal legislature. Madison disliked the appointment of judges by the legislature but also wasn’t satisfied with a unilateral Executive Branch. He ultimately suggested that judicial appointments should be made by the Senate. This issue of judicial appointments was debated vigorously and continued over multiple sessions as delegates traded proposals. Charles Pinckney of South Carolina and Roger Sherman of Connecticut opposed Wilson and pushed for the legislative appointment of Justices.

Madison, however, moved us closer to our present system by suggesting that only the Senate should have the power to appoint Justices to the Supreme Court and not the House of Representatives.
Nathaniel Gorham, a delegate from Massachusetts, first introduced the concept of appointment by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. This balanced approach resolved the concerns of delegates who believed unilateral Presidential appointments would lead to monarchy, while also addressing the concern that legislative appointments were simply too vulnerable to the fleeting parochial interests that may dominate the discussion on any given day.

More recently, on September 7, 1787, the delegates unanimously agreed on the final language that governs the nomination and confirmation of Supreme Court Justices to this day. Our Founders’ focus on the appointment and confirmation of the Supreme Court Justices was not an academic exercise, nor was it an intergovernmental turf war. It was an iterative, deliberative process with a clear goal: a strong and independent judiciary.

Alexander Hamilton, probably the most prolific of our Founders when it comes to the written work, directly addressed the independence of the judiciary in The Federalist Papers. He argued: ‘‘Liberty can have nothing to apprehend from the judiciary alone, but would have everything to fear from its union with either of the other departments.’’

Hamilton was concerned that a Supreme Court too heavily influenced by Congress or the White House would not adequately protect the rights and freedoms of the American people. He wrote that an independent judiciary ‘‘will always be the least dangerous to the political rights of the Constitution; because it will be least in a capacity to annoy or injure them.’’

‘‘Tying the hands of the Supreme Court by keeping an empty seat on the nine-member bench amounts to the union between the departments that Hamilton so feared. Refusing to even consider a Supreme Court nominee strengthens the Senate to the detriment of the executive and judicial branches, throws off a carefully crafted balance of power, and contravenes our Founders’ intent. Some legal scholars, Senators, and members of the judiciary argue that intent is irrelevant and that we should strictly construe the words on the page.

Let’s look at the plain meaning of the constitutional text. Article 2, section 1, states that ‘‘The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish.’’

While lower courts could be established, the Supreme Court resolves issues between and among the States. It is the highest Court in the land, a Court of finality.

The Constitution specifically addresses the appointment of Justices to the Senate. The advice and consent of the Senate is provided in Article 2, section 2, which states the President ‘‘shall nominate’’—and I repeat ‘‘shall nominate’’—‘‘and by and with the advice and Consent of the Senate, shall’’—and I repeat ‘‘shall’’—‘‘appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court.’’

‘‘Shall’’ is not a word that is considered ambiguous. We will grapple with the novel constitutional questions for as long as this Nation exists. But the question of how Supreme Court Justices are appointed is something our Founders debated, decided, and they enshrined in the Constitution.

The President is required to nominate a Justice, and the Senate has the job of confirming or rejecting that appointment. If the Senate attempts to undermine the President’s constitutional responsibility to nominate a Justice, this body fails to provide advice and consent on that nomination—well, we then have abdicated one of the Senate’s most important and sacred constitutional obligations.

The Senate has a longstanding tradition of swiftly considering and confirming judicial nominees. Presidents and the Senate have historically taken their responsibility to fill the Supreme Court very seriously, even when they were at odds over who that nominee may have been. I am surprised and also disappointed that so many of my colleagues seem to be ignoring their constitutional obligations in a stark departure from the history of the U.S. Senate.

According to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, since the Judiciary Committee’s creation 200 years ago, they have typically reported Supreme Court nominations that were opposed by a committee majority to allow the full Senate to make the final decision on whether the nominee should be confirmed.

Let me repeat this very important fact. Even if a nominee was opposed in committee, their nomination was still brought to the floor of the Senate for a vote.

Let’s also consider recent history. Since 1975, the time from a President’s formal nomination to hearing has averaged 42 days. The time from a nomination to confirmation has averaged 70 days. The time from a nomination to floor vote has averaged 70 days.

The current vacancy we are dealing with occurred 269 days before the 2016 election and with 342 days remaining in President Obama’s term in office. With only a little over a year to go, it is safe to say that there is more than enough time to nominate, consider, and confirm a Supreme Court Justice before the November election if we move at a deliberate, average pace, on par with what has existed for over four decades.

If the Senate waits for a new administration before even considering a nominee, we will be approaching a full year with an empty seat on the highest Court in the land. Not since the American Civil War has the Senate taken longer than a year to fill a Supreme Court vacancy.

The recent suggestion that Presidents and the Senate work together and historically do not drag out Supreme Court nominations: An eight-member Supreme Court simply cannot fully do its job. The cases in which the Supreme Court decides on having all nine Justices to break a deadlock are often those that are most contested. They involve timely, novel legal issues and resolve splits between Federal circuit courts.

Legal scholar Justin Pidot recently cited Chief Justice William Rehnquist regarding situations where the court of appeals had arrived at different conclusions about the resolution of legal issues. Rehnquist said: ‘‘Affirmance of each of such conflicting results by an evenly divided Court would be the very undesirable result that the same federal law would differ in meaning in various parts of the country.’’

Federal law is just that: It is Federal. We cannot have one interpretation of Federal law in Michigan, Ohio, and Kentucky and a whole different interpretation of law in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana.

Previous Presidents have weighed in on the importance of a fully operational Court. President Reagan said: ‘‘Every day that passes with a Supreme Court below full strength impairs the people’s business in that crucially important body.’’

I know many of my colleagues in the Senate are concerned that the Senate has not confirmed a Supreme Court Justice and I wish to repeat his important words that have so much relevance to what we are debating here today. He said: ‘‘Every day that passes with a Supreme Court below full strength impairs the people’s business in that crucially important body.’’

In fact, President Reagan was able to make a Supreme Court appointment in his final year in office. The Senate fulfilled its duties by providing timely confirmation of that nominee, Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Forcing lower courts to serve as the courts of last resort empowers congressionally created courts and weakens the Supreme Court in a way that was never intended by the framers of the United States Constitution.

I wish to remind my colleagues that the Constitution allows Congress to decide how to organize the lower courts. But the Constitution requires—it requires—the advice and consent of the Senate for confirmation of Supreme Court Justices. We must do our job so that the Supreme Court can do theirs.
The American people have elected President Obama to office twice, and he has a constitutional obligation and clear authority to nominate a candidate to succeed Justice Scalia on the Supreme Court.

The Senate has previously confirmed six Supreme Court nominees in Presidential election years, including most recently under President Reagan. There is no reason we should not consider any nominee put forward by the President with a fair hearing and a vote. Every member of this body has the responsibility to thoroughly scrutinize and decide whether or not to confirm the President’s nominee.

I ran for the U.S. Senate because of my desire to serve the people of the State of Michigan. I took an oath, as did every Member of this body, swearing to defend the Constitution and faithfully discharge the duties of our office.

The Senate must honor the thoughtfulness of our country’s forefathers and respect the independence of each of the branches of our Nation’s government. We must also respect the United States Constitution. The role of the Supreme Court is too important to our democracy for the Senate to ignore the Constitution and wait nearly a year to do its job.

Members of this body must fulfill their obligations. The Members of this body have their duty and uphold their constitutional oath. And the Members of this body must fully consider and evaluate the qualifications of any nominee the President submits.

I look forward to doing my own thorough review of the President’s nominee and working with my colleagues to fulfill our essential constitutional duties.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, last year the law everybody wanted to fix was named No Child Left Behind. Despite many different opinions and many different political attitudes, we got it done. I give great credit to the Senator from Washington, Mrs. PATTY MURRAY, and to the members of our Education Committee, 22 Senators of widely divergent political views, for their willingness to put their differences aside.

I often say if all you want to do is announce your opinion, you can do that at home. You can stand on the street corner and preach or you can get your own radio program, but if you want to be a U.S. Senator, after you announce your opinion, you are supposed to get a result, and that means work with other people to identify common areas of interest. And we were able to do that with the bill that fixed No Child Left Behind. Not only did we reach a consensus that needed to be fixed, we reached a consensus on how to fix it. The President signed it on December 19. He called it a Christmas miracle. It passed broadly in this body and it had the effect of reversing the trend toward a national school board, of repealing the common core mandate, and of, according to the Wall Street Journal, being the largest devolution of power from Washington to local control of schools in 25 years. So it was a significant bill, and I would argue that no bill that the Congress enacted last year was more important.

This year, I would suggest that if we are successful, that the most important bill that passes this body will be a bill to advance biomedical research, a companion bill to the 21st century cures bill the House of Representatives already passed. That is because this year is the opportunity for everybody wanting to make a mark in the Senate this year to do just that. We are able to cure some cancers instead of just treat cancers. Children with cystic fibrosis are beginning to be cured. Children with devices and with data—that people are spending on documentation. It will prove the practice of medicine. It will create an environment where we have the opportunity to help virtually every American.

We are able to cure some cancers instead of just treat cancers. Children with cystic fibrosis are beginning to be cured. Children with devices and with data—that people are spending on documentation. It will prove the practice of medicine. It will create an environment where we have the opportunity to help virtually every American.

The American people have elected the President and see if you can, and we were able to do that.

The only way to get support for the President’s Precision Medicine Initiative, the only way to get the Cancer Moonshot, the only way to get a surge of funding that may include mandatory funding for the NIH is to pass this bill. Let’s be blunt about it.

One good news story is we are making good progress. We are making good progress. I wanted to report to the Senate that this morning we had our second markup, our second meeting of our full committee where we discussed the measure we have been working on for more than a year for our biomedical innovation bill. We have come up with 50 bipartisan proposals that Members have been working on to get patients access to more drugs, cures, and treatments in a safe and effective way. We have held 10 bipartisan hearings on our innovation project, and 6 of those 10 hearings have been on an electronic health care records system. That program, we found, was in a ditch. The taxpayers have spent $30 million on it to draw into hospitals to use electronic medical records so that you could take—and you know what your records are and the doctors could prescribe and diagnosis more easily. The problem was, it wasn’t done very well. Stage one was helpful, most of the hospitals and doctors said to me. Stage two was difficult, and stage three, in their words, was terrifying.

Precision medicine will not work unless we have an interoperable electronic health care records system that has as its goal simplifying what happens in the doctor’s office or the patient’s bedroom in such a way—both with devices and with data—that people can make sense of it. It will improve the practice of medicine. It will reduce the huge amount of time doctors are spending on documentation. Some doctors say they spend 40 or 50 percent of their time doing that. If they are doing that, either they are doing something wrong or the government is doing something wrong, and my guess is we are. That is my guess.

So we set out this year to take several steps to change that.
The administration—and I will give them credit—has gotten the message as well, and they, including Dr. DeSalvo and Secretary Burwell and Andy Slavitt, the head of CMS, have made a priority of trying to take this electronic medical records system and get it back on track so that doctors and physicians will see it as an opportunity and not as a burden.

We have several steps in our legislation that will help make electronic medical records work better. They include giving agencies more flexibility for alliances like the Vanderbil-Google partnership that was announced the other day. They include dealing with the privacy issues that occur when you get a million genomes sequenced. They include encouraging interoperability and data sharing that is essential to doing this. So we are all working together to do that, but it will be necessary to pass our bill for electronic medical records to move more rapidly, and will be necessary for the electronic medical system to work if the President’s Precision Medicine Initiative is to work.

Last month we had a markup in our committee where we considered 15 of our bipartisan proposals and 7 bills, and we passed them all. The bills will mean better pacemakers for Americans with heart conditions, better rehabilitation for stroke victims, more young researchers entering the medical field, and better access for doctors to their patients’ medical records, as I just described. And for the parents of a child suffering from a rare disease like cystic fibrosis, the bill from Senators Bennet, Burr, Warren, and Hatch increases the chances that researchers will find a treatment or cure for your child’s disease. That was the good work in the committee last month.

Today, we met all morning and we considered 7 more bills, and about 15 more were incorporated into those bills. Each of those bills, the Senators feel, is an important step forward. For example, Senators Casey, Isakson, Brown, and Kirk offered a bill, which was passed, to create drugs to treat or cure rare diseases in children.

Senators Burr, Bennet, Hatch, and Donnelly proposed, and it was passed, to create a new system for breakthrough devices that is similar to the breakthrough drugs that Senator Burr and Senator Bennet and others worked on in 2012, and that has shown such promise and such results. Everyone is pleasantly—I wouldn’t say surprised, but maybe surprised by how many new drugs have been approved by the FDA using the breakthrough process from 2012. We hope the same will be true with the breakthrough process for devices.

Senators Bennet and Hatch offered a bill that would remove the uncertainty in the definition of ‘medical devices’ that was adopted in 1976. Most people didn’t even know what software was in 1976.

Senators Burr, Casey, Isakson, and Roberts had a bill to spur the development to save the lives of victims of bioterror.

Senators Isakson, Casey, Donnelly, and Roberts offered a bill to prevent the promising new combination of products from getting caught in red-tape at the FDA. By combination products, I mean devices and drugs together.

A bill from Senators Wicker, Klobuchar, Baucus, and Franken would increase the say patients would have in the FDA approval process about treatments received in a clinical trial.

Senators Franken, Nelson, Isakson, and Brown had a bill to encourage mandatory companies to develop a treatment, cure, or vaccine for the Zika virus.

These were all adopted, but for these to become law, we have to pass our bill. We have to bring it to the floor this year, and make it in a bipartisan way and pass our bill.

At 3 markups—our third one will be in April—we will consider 50 proposals, and every single one of them has bipartisan support. There are two or three areas where we have differences of opinion. I am glad to see the Senator from Illinois is here because one of the areas we discussed this morning is one where he has been very important, and that is to have a surge of additional funding at the Institutes of Health. Numbers of us were very proud of the work Senator Murray, Senator Blunt, Senator Durbin, and others did to make sure that we had $2 billion more in the regular appropriations last year for the National Institutes of Health—very important.

A number of us believe that it would be appropriate in connection with this innovation legislation to have a surge of additional funding for specific projects at the National Institutes of Health, but not at the expense of a steady increase in the regular discretionary funding. There are a variety of reasons for that. I won’t go into them all today because the Senator from Illinois may want to speak. But if we are talking about mandatory funding, mandatory funding is already out of control, and the President’s new budget has $682 billion of mandatory funding in it. It also has new taxes to pay for it, which the Congress isn’t going to adopt. So it is more responsible. My proposal would be to reduce mandatory funding by $682 billion.

In any event, if we have any mandatory funding, it needs to replace other mandatory funding. And we don’t want to create a situation where anyone gets the idea that mandatory funding is a substitute for steady increases in discretionary funding, which has happened before. As Senator Blunt pointed out this week in our appropriations hearing, when the Congress put in the mandatory funding at the community health centers and the National Health Service Corps, the discretionary funds started to dry up.

So we have different proposals for how to deal with this. The Democratic Senators on our committee have recommended $50 billion over the next 10 years. I recommended an NIH innovation fund which would create a surge of funding at the highest levels at NIH, including the President’s Precision Medicine Initiative, the Cancer Moonshot, the BRAIN Initiative, Big Biothink Awards, and a Young Investigator Corps. It would be in addition to mandatory funds, not a replacement for them.

So my hope is that Senator Murray and I and our committee can work together over the next 2 or 3 weeks and complete our work on our biomedical research legislation by our markup on March 9, 2016. I hope we can come to the floor and present to Senator McConnell, the majority leader, along with that, a bipartisan consensus for an additional surge of funding, including mandatory funding for medical research legislation by our markup on March 9, 2016. I hope we can work that way in the committee, and I hope the Senate will look forward to doing this.

I will conclude by simply saying that last year I believe no bill was more important that we worked on in the Senate than the bill to fix No Child Left Behind. It affected 50 million children, 3.5 million teachers, and 100,000 public schools. The only reason it happened was because we had Senators of very different backgrounds and attitudes and political differences who agreed that a result was more important. The same here. The opportunity everybody wants us to take this year is to take advantage of this magnificent scientific revolution and encourage the researchers and the other steps we need to take to move treatments and drugs into the medicine cabinets and the doctors’ offices more rapidly, in a safe and effective way. I believe we can do that. I hope our work is finished by early April. I hope it is bipartisan.

I look forward to the opportunity of being able to say later this year that the most important bill the Senate worked on with the House and the President is this 21st century cure ideas. The House has done its job. The President is out front. We need to catch up. I am convinced we can.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

Yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. Durbin. Mr. President, having followed my friend and colleague from Tennessee, Senator Alexander has spelled out an exciting possibility, and I know it won’t be easy. It is a heavy political lift. But what he is talking about is coming up with a dramatic commitment of funds for medical research for the next 8, 9, or 10 years, over and above the ordinary budget of the National Institutes of Health.

We have sat down and talked about this several times, and I wholeheartedly endorse not only his concept
but also when he gets down to specifics. Some of the things he wants to focus on, including the Moonshot for Cancer, for example, is one, of course, the President and the Vice President and the vast majority of Americans would say, oh, there’s that. It’s a single one of us who hasn’t been touched by the threat or the actual disease of cancer among our families and friends.

I won’t go through the entire list, but whether we are dealing with the issues involving addiction, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, including, 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need it, but they keep generating these volumes because the demand is there—not for medicinal purposes, sadly, but for narcotic purposes. The pharmaceutical industry has a responsibility, and doctors have a responsibility. Those who buy from the pharmaceutical companies to the end user except with a doctor and a pharmacy in most instances.

Many doctors are too loose in their prescribing; it comes too easily. They prescribe too many pills. I guess somebody makes more money that way, or maybe doctors are not bothered on weekends that way, but, sadly, it puts into circulation a lot of medical drugs that are not needed for pain. Some pharmacies know exactly what is going on as people walk in with script after script for opioids. They fill them without question. Many States don’t have laws to monitor these sales. They continue to sell the drugs to addicts who are trying to become dependent on them. They prescribe too many pills.

I have seen it across my State. There isn’t a city too small or a suburb too wealthy or any corner of my State that hasn’t been hit by this crisis. It is everywhere. Many of the kids that I have seen at these roundtables who have survived it and tell their heroic stories of coming back from heroin addiction—you look in their eyes and say: I would never have picked that kid out of a high school class to be a heroin addict. Some of them have been addicts for years before they finally get the treatment they need.

We need a comprehensive solution to address the epidemic. We must not allow drug companies from flooding the market with excessive amounts of addictive pills. We must encourage the Drug Enforcement Administration to use their existing authority to keep unnecessary narcotics from the market. We must crack down on doctors who over-prescribe and pharmacies that over-dispense. We must remove barriers to substance use disorder treatments, which is why Senator King and I introduced legislation that removes barriers to lower-income patients suffering from substance abuse disorders are able to get the care they so desperately need. And we must put our money where our mouth is. We cannot expect real change to come about through good intentions. We can authorize all the programs we want, issue all the directives we want, cite all the statistics we want, but nothing will change unless we give our Federal agencies and local governments the resources necessary to tackle this complex problem head on.

This bill before us is a step in the right direction. It requires the establishment of a Federal interagency task force on opioid abuse and pain medication prescribing, creates a national drug awareness campaign on the risks of opioid abuse, and authorizes grants to States, locals, and nonprofits to address opioid abuse and fund treatment alternatives. This bill could have a positive impact on communities in need if we are able to provide the necessary funding. That is why in addition to supporting the underlying bill I also strongly supported the amendment that Senator Shaheen offered last week. That amendment would have provided $600 million in emergency supplemental appropriations to address the heroin and opioid abuse epidemic. These funds would have helped ramp up law enforcement efforts, drug treatment and enforcement programs, and prevention programs through the Justice Department. They would have funded prescription drug monitoring programs. They would have improved access to medication assisted treatment services to high-risk areas as well as support school and community partnerships to create safe and drug-free environments and provide additional assistance to States to help pay for prevention and treatment care.

Unfortunately, Senator Shaheen’s amendment was defeated when a majority of Republicans decided to vote against it. If we fail to provide the needed resources to help communities and families in need, we may be back here a year from now saying we should have done more. Families in Illinois and across the country can’t wait that long.

I support both the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act and the Shaheen amendment. But the bill should also address some of the many issues raised in our roundtable discussions in Illinois while talking to families, doctors, law enforcement, and those who have overcome substance abuse addiction.

That is why I introduced several amendments that would have helped improve the underlying bill, from requiring greater consideration at FDA before new opioids can come onto the market, to creating incentives for States to improve their prescription drug-monitoring programs by removing existing barriers to substance abuse treatment for lower-income patients, to requiring greater transparency on how many opioids are being manufactured in the United States annually. I am disappointed that many of these amendments will not receive a vote this week, but I will continue working with my colleagues in the Senate to advance these important proposals.

Let me say that one of the things that has helped is the fact that years ago here in the U.S. Senate, two of my colleagues who no longer serve really did something historic. One was Paul Wellstone of Minnesota, who passed away in an airplane crash, and the other, Pete Domenici, a retired Senator from New Mexico. They required that every health insurance policy in America cover two things that weren’t covered by many: one, mental health counseling and the other, substance abuse treatment. We built that into ObamaCare, so when you buy a health insurance policy in America today, it covers substance abuse treatment as well as mental health counseling. Luckily for many families, when their kids end up being addicted, they can turn to their health insurance, and their health insurance can help pay for substance abuse treatment. We need other things besides what it would help for Medicaid, but for those who want to repeal ObamaCare and get rid of it, that is another provision to ask them about. Do they really want to get rid of a requirement that health insurance policies cover mental health counseling and substance abuse treatment? I think it is important that we have it. I am not sure what we would do without it.

The opioid abuse and heroin epidemic is a national public health emergency that requires a comprehensive response coupled with the necessary funding to actually make a difference. The amendments I have filed, as well as the Shaheen amendment, would make important improvements to provide emergency funding to help families in Illinois and across the country. Our communities need us to come together as partners to help solve this problem. I hope we do not let them down.

FILING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. President, I have a colleague from Oklahoma is here. This is the last statement I want to make, and it relates to the Supreme Court vacancy. A group of historians and scholars sent a letter to President Obama about the Supreme Court vacancy occasioned by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia. The signers of the letter include Robert Dallek, Doris Kearns Goodwin, David M. Kennedy, Thomas E. Mann, Norman Ornstein, Geoff Stone, and numerous others.

The letter provides a helpful historical perspective on the decision by the Senate Republican majority to refuse any nominee to fill this vacancy a year ago. It states that the Senate—something that has never happened in the history of the U.S. Senate.

The Senate Republicans have said to keep that Scalia vacancy right where it is—a 4-to-4 Supreme Court for at least a year longer. We haven’t had a vacancy in the Supreme Court for over a year since the Civil War tore this Nation apart over 150 years ago.

This letter that has been sent to the President will be shared here. It makes the case that the act of being called for by the Republican majority are unprecedented—unprecedented. They have never happened—the fact that they would refuse to have a hearing for a nominee to fill the Scalia vacancy or a vote on that nominee before the U.S. Senate—something that has never happened in the history of the U.S. Senate.

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gone in a year. We will wait until after the election. No. They said the Constitution requires President Reagan to send the Senate a name, and it requires the Senate to advise and consent, and they did. They had a hearing and they had a vote. William Brennan, a Ronald Reagan appointee to the Supreme Court, was sent to the Supreme Court by President Ronald Reagan with the support of the Democratic Senate majority. That is consistent with the Constitution.

I hope we can return to that, and I hope that future generations will judge that this Senate under the control of the Senate majority party is going to live by the words of our Constitution.

As I mentioned, a number of prominent Senators and scholars from across the political spectrum sent a letter to President Obama about the current vacancy on the Supreme Court.

The letter begins by saying:

We express our dismay at the unprecedented breach of norms by the Senate majority in refusing to consider a nomination for the Supreme Court made by a president with 11 months to serve in the position. . . .

It is standard practice when a vacancy occurs on the Supreme Court to have a president, whatever the stage in his term, nominate a successor and have the Senate consider it. And standard practice (with limited exceptions for the Senate, after hearings and deliberation, to confirm the president’s choice, regardless of party control, when that choice is deemed acceptable to a Senate majority).

The letter notes that history is, “plete with instances where a vacancy on the Supreme Court was filled during a presidential election year.”

This includes 1968 under President Reagan; 1940 under President Roosevelt; President Harding in 1916 for two nominees named by President Wilson; and 1912 under President Taft.

The letter also discusses how President Eisenhower used his recess appointment power in the presidential election year of 1956 to appoint Justice William Brennan. Eisenhower, a Republican, made that recess appointment on October 16 while the Senate was under Democratic control.

The letter says, “there was no objection to Eisenhower’s use of the recess appointment—there was instead a widespread recognition that it was bad to have a Supreme Court operate for months without its full complement of nine members.”

The letter then shifts from the lessons of history to the logical fallacies of the Republicans’ position that a nominee of a so-called lame duck President should not be considered. Here’s what it says:

If we accept the logic that decisions made by “lame duck” agents and prosecutors to do their job every day lever the election, we should expect Senators to do their jobs as well and fill this Supreme Court vacancy.

Earlier this week, 356 constitutional law scholars wrote a letter to the Senate, explaining that “a long term vacancy jeopardizes the Court’s ability to resolve disputed questions of federal law, causing uncertainty and hampering the administration of justice across the country.”

Justice Scalia, in a 2004 memorandum discussing the Supreme Court’s recusal policy, noted the problem the Court faces when only eight Justices hear a case. He said that when the Court proceeds to hear a case with eight Justices, it “rais[es] the possibility that, by reason of a tie vote, it will find itself unable to resolve the significant legal issue presented by the case.” He then went on to note that under the Supreme Court’s Statement of Recusal Policy, “even one unnecessary recusal impairs the functioning of the Court.”

Why would the Senate purposefully try to impair the functioning of the Supreme Court by leaving it with only eight Justices?

The Senate should do its job and consider a Supreme Court nominee so the Court can function like it’s supposed to. I urge my Republican colleagues to do their job. Give the President’s nominee a hearing and a vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORPHAN DRUGS

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, in light of recognition of Rare Disease Day, I wish to speak about orphan drug exclusivity and trade promotion authority.

Congress passed the Orphan Drug Act, “ODA”, of 1983, Pub. L. 97-414, to address a longstanding unmet need to develop new treatments, diagnostics, and cures for rare diseases and disorders. I am proud to be one of the lead Senate sponsors of the ODA, which was passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. This act and the Rare Diseases Act of 2002—which I also championed—created financial incentives to support the research and production of orphan drugs, including 7 years of market exclusivity, tax credits, and research grants, and also established the Orphan Products Board at FDA and the Office of Rare Diseases under the National Institutes of Health.

The purpose of these acts was to encourage the development of new “orphan” treatments, diagnostics, and cures for the millions of Americans with rare disease who lacked access to effective medicines because the existing incentives were insufficient to develop and market drugs for such small groups of patients.
The ODA has been enormously successful. Before Congress enacted the ODA in 1983, the Food and Drug Administration, FDA, approved only 38 drugs in the United States specifically to treat orphan diseases. From the passage through 1989 until May 2016, the FDA approved 353 orphan drugs and granted orphan designations to 2,116 compounds. As of 2010, 200 of the roughly 7,000 officially designated orphan diseases have become treatable.

Yet, despite the benefits of these policies, the incentives and access guarantees found in the ODA are not yet part of any free trade agreement negotiations.

The Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015, or TPA, contain a number of negotiating objectives for the administration to follow. For example, the TPA law’s negotiating objectives require that U.S. trade agreements provide a standard of intellectual property rights protection that is similar to that found in the United States, which includes providing incentives for biopharmaceutical innovation that are similar to those in the United States. The language in the TPA law is necessary, although it does not explicitly reference critical incentives for orphan drug development, I want to make it clear that these incentives, including the 7-year market exclusivity at the heart of the ODA, are consistent with the TPA’s law’s requirement that U.S. trade agreements provide a standard of intellectual property protection that is similar to U.S. law.

This is especially important because vital incentives for orphan drug development are lacking in many markets outside the United States, hindering the development of treatments, diagnostics, and cures for rare diseases—particularly diseases endemic to those markets. A lack of incentives for orphan drug development in any one country can have a very real impact on the likelihood of investment into a research or cure for a given disease. Particularly in the case of ultra-rare diseases, those affecting fewer than 1 in 50,000 individuals, there may only be a handful of patients around the world who would benefit from a particular treatment or cure, and removing a number of them from the pool of potential patients may render investments in these therapies untenable and could drive up costs for rare disease patients in the United States.

Therefore, I want to make it clear that I believe it is appropriate for the administration to negotiate ODA incentives and access guarantees, including the 7-year market exclusivity period, in future U.S. trade agreements and that the intent of Congress is that TPA’s negotiating objectives are consistent with that goal.

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

In keeping with the committee’s intention to ensure that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD–423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY COOPERATION AGENCY, Arlington, VA, March 9, 2016.

Hon. Bob Corker, Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Dear Mr. Chairman: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended by Section 502 of the Trade and SME Promotion Act of 2015, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 15–81, concerning the Department of the Air Force’s proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to Indonesia for defense articles and services estimated to cost $95 million. After this letter is delivered to your office, we plan to issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale.

Sincerely,

J.W. Rixey, Vice Admiral, USN, Director. Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 15–81
Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Indonesia.
(ii) Total Estimated Value:

Major Defense Equipment* $ 80 million.
Other ...... 15 million.
Total ..... 95 million.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services Under Consideration for Purchase:

Major Defense Equipment (MDE):
Thirty-six (36) AIM–120C–7 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAMs), One (1) Missile Guidance Section.

Non-Major Defense Equipment (non-MDE):
Control section support equipment, spare parts, services, integration activities, logistics, technical contractor engineering and technical support, technical publications, familiarization training, test equipment, and other related elements.

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: None.
(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc., Paid, Offered, or Agreed to Be Paid: None.
(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: See Attached Annex.
(viii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: March 9, 2016

* as defined in Section 47(b) of the Arms Export Control Act.

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Indonesia–AIM–120C–7 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAMS)

The Government of Indonesia has requested a possible sale of thirty-six (36) AIM–120C–7 AMRAAMS and one (1) Missile Guidance Section. Also included in this possible sale are control section support equipment, spare parts, services, logistics, technical contractor engineering and technical support, loading adaptors, technical publications, familiarization training, test equipment, and other related elements. The total estimated value of MDE is $80 million. The overall total estimated value is $85 million.

This proposed sale contributes to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of a key partner that has been, and continues to be, an important force for political stability and economic progress in the Asia-Pacific region.

The proposed sale improves Indonesia’s capability to deter regional threats and strengthen its homeland defense. Indonesia is able to absorb this additional equipment and support into its armed forces.

Implementation of this proposed sale will not require the assignment of any U.S. Government, contractor representative to Indonesia.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 15–81 Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

Annex Item No. vii

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology

AIM–120C–7 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air (AMRAAM) is a radar-guided missile featuring digital technology and micro-miniature solid-state electronics. AMRAAM capabilities include lock-on-look-down, multiple launches against multiple targets, resistance to electronic countermeasures, and interception of high flying, low flying, and maneuvering targets. The AIM–120C–7 is an AMRAAM All Up Round is classified CONFIDENTIAL. Major components and subsystems are classified up to CONFIDENTIAL, and technology data and other documentation are classified up to SECRET.

2. If a technologically advanced adversary were to obtain knowledge of the specific hardware and software elements, the information could be used to develop countermeasures or equivalent systems that might reduce weapon system effectiveness or be utilized in the development of a system with similar or advanced capabilities.

3. This sale is necessary in furtherance of the U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives outlined in the Policy Justification. Moreover, the benefits to be derived from this sale, as outlined in the Policy Justification, outweigh the potential damage from this sale, as outlined in the Policy Justification.
Scalia and thank him for his service to the Supreme Court and the country.

Justice Scalia was a first-generation American, and his life was a testament to the American dream. A student of history and the law, Antonin Scalia had a commitment to public service that culminated in his appointment as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court by President Ronald Reagan in 1986.

Justice Scalia served on the Court for almost 30 years and in that time made many important contributions to our legal system. While he had firm convictions, he also loved people and never let ideas get in the way of friendship, most notably with fellow Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Senator Margaret Chase Smith once said: “Public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation.”

Justice Scalia believed in that complete dedication. Our thoughts and prayers remain with his family at this time, and we thank him and them for his service.

REMEMBERING SHANE N. YATES

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life of Shane N. Yates. Shane was the executive director of the Ohio Society of Association Executives. Shane had a fierce commitment to his organization and his profession. Shane had a relentless drive to serve all those he represented and lead all whom he worked with.

Shane was a graduate of Ashland University and earned his certificate in nonprofit executive leadership from Indiana University. Shane was also a chapter adviser for his fraternity, Phi Kappa Psi; a past board member for Meeting Professionals International Ohio Chapter; and a volunteer for the United Way of Central Ohio.

A proactive and high-energy executive with more than 15 years of achievement in association leadership, Shane was named a 40 Under 40 honoree in 2014 by the Association Forum of Chicagoland and USAE. While serving as the director, Shane helped the Ohio Society of Association Executives achieve many milestones while never settling with the status quo.

Shane N. Yates will forever leave a mark on the Ohio Society of Association Executives and all who knew him.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DR. MARK FOLEY

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Dr. Mark Foley, who has served with great distinction and honor at the University of Mobile for more than 17 years. Dr. Foley has served as president of the University of Mobile since 1998 and is the third president of the university since its founding in 1961. He will be retiring from his post on July 31, 2016.

Dr. Foley came to the University of Mobile during a critical transitional time and led the school through a period of significant growth. Under his guidance, the university has flourished. Facilities have been updated, the school is on more solid financial footing, and programs and the stature of the university have improved.

During his time at the University of Mobile, Dr. Foley led the university to invest $44.8 million in capital projects, including a recent $7 million campus enhancement program that thoroughly revitalized the campus. Under Dr. Foley’s leadership, the university gained national recognition from U.S. News & World Report, America’s Best Christian Colleges, America’s Best College Buys, and many more.

Dr. Foley’s desire to integrate a Christian worldview into all aspects of academics, campus life, and university operations at this quality Baptist-affiliated institution. The university now has more than 1,500 students enrolled in over 40 undergraduate and graduate programs.

A former truckstop operator, Dr. Foley was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1990 after receiving his master of divinity degree from the New Orleans seminary. He received his doctorate of education from that same institution in 1992 and completed postdoctoral studies in education. Though the university was struggling with a variety of financial problems when Dr. Foley took over in 1998, he turned the school around.

The University of Mobile has continued to thrive under Dr. Foley’s tenure. As a native of Mobile, AL, it has been my honor to work with Dr. Foley and witness the great accomplishments he has achieved at the University of Mobile. His hard work and genuine passion for higher education is apparent and the students of the University of Mobile will miss his leadership. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for all he has done for the university, for Mobile, and for Alabama.

I thank the Chair.

REMEMBERING SHILOH FOREST SUNDISTROM

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the contribution of a young Oregonian whose life was cut far too short, but whose impact will stay with my State forever.

Shiloh Forest Sundstrom, a young leader in the field of conservation-based rural development, was tragically killed by a hit-and-run driver in November at age 34.

Shiloh was a child of Oregon. He was born in the coastal mountains of western Lane County and lived much of his life enjoying all that rural upbringing had to offer. He loved the horses and cows on his parents’ ranch and attended school in the small town of Mapleton.

A gifted student, Shiloh was his high school class valedictorian in 2000 and was accepted to Brandeis University. As an undergraduate, he spent a semester abroad at the School for Field Studies in Kenya, where he saw that the struggles of rural communities in Kenya paralleled the problems facing rural Oregon communities.

Studying the ways in which the Maasai people of Kenya struggled to balance their efforts to maintain a traditional resource-based economy while benefiting from wildlife conservation and tourism, Shiloh saw that the positive lessons being learned there could be applied back home in Oregon.

After graduating with honors from Brandeis, Shiloh came back to his beloved Oregon for his master’s degree in forestry at Oregon State University. He then moved to the geography department to work toward a doctorate in rural land use planning and returned to Kenya several times to pursue his research.

However, Shiloh was much more than a gifted student. He had the rare ability to take his research out of the classroom and work to implement positive change in the broader world. His work with the Siuslaw Institute, founded by his father John Sundstrom, and with the Siuslaw Watershed Council, injected a reasonable approach to often contentious natural resource issues, always with a focus on positive outcomes.

Shiloh always strived for success through collaboration—what I like to call the Oregon way. He was involved...
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–4664. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Fluopyram; Pesticide Tolerances” (FRL No. 9945–21-OCSP) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 8, 2016; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4665. 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; New Mexico, and Albuquerque/Bernalillo County; Revise to Establish Small Business Stationary Source Technical and Environmental Compliance Assistance Programs” (FRL No. 9943–43-Region 6) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 8, 2016; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–4666. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Air Plan Approval; Ohio; Base Year Emission Inventories for the 2008 8-Hour Ozone Standard” (FRL No. 9943–46-Region 5) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 8, 2016; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–4667. A communication from the Chief of the Branch of Recovery and State Grants, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Endangered and Threatened Wildlife; Designation of Critical Habitat for Lower Columbia Coho Salmon and Skagit Sound Steelhead; Final Rule” (RIN0188–BB28) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 2, 2016; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.


REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. BARRASSO, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, without amendment: S. 1443. A bill to amend the Indian Employment, Training and Related Services Dem- onstration Act; and to authorize the ability of Indian tribes to integrate the employ- ment, training, and related services from di-

verse Federal sources, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 114–225).

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. ALEXANDER for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

S. 2665. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to improve the historic rehabilitation tax credit, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MARKSY (for himself and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 2656. A bill to prohibit air carriers from imposing fees that are not reasonable and proportional to the costs incurred by the air carriers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. KIRK (for himself, Mr. WARNER, and Mr. GARDNER):

S. 2657. A bill to require consultations on reducing Korean Americans with family members in North Korea; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. NEL- SON, Ms. AYOTTE, and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. 2658. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to authorize appropriations for the Federal Aviation Administration for fiscal years 2016 through 2017, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. BURR (for himself, Mrs. CAP- RITO, Mr. HELHL, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. RYDER, Mr. PETERS, Mr. DONNELLEY, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. BROWN):

S. Res. 394. A resolution recognizing the 195th anniversary of the independence of Greece and celebrating democracy in Greece and the United States; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. ENZI (for himself, Mr. MENEN- DEZ, Ms. BOXER, Mr. HARRIS, Mr. BOXER, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. RYDER, Mr. PETERS, Mrs. DONNELLEY, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. BROWN):

S. Res. 395. A resolution supporting the designation of March 2016, as ‘‘National
Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

At the request of Mr. CORKER, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HÉRÍNCHÍK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 553, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend the new markets tax credit, and for other purposes.

S. 911

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VINNENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1455, a bill to provide access to medication-assisted therapy, and for other purposes.

S. 1455

At the request of Mr. WICKER, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1597, a bill to enhance patient engagement in the medical product development process, and for other purposes.

S. 1597

At the request of Mr. HOEVEN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1715, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Pilgrims.

S. 1715

At the request of Mr. VITTER, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1793, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax relief for major disasters declared in any of calendar years 2012 through 2015, to make certain tax relief provisions permanent, and for other purposes.

S. 1793

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) and the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 1899, a bill to amend chapter 90 of title 18, United States Code, to provide Federal jurisdiction for the theft of trade secrets, and for other purposes.

S. 1899

At the request of Mr. WICKER, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2067, a bill to establish EUReka Prize Competitions to accelerate discovery and development of disease-modifying, preventive, or curative treatments for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia, to encourage efforts to enhance detection and diagnosis of such diseases, or to enhance the quality and efficiency of care of individuals with such diseases.

S. 2067

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HEINICHÍK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2147, a bill to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 with respect to participant votes on the suspension of benefits under multimember plans in critical and declining status.

S. 2147

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2226, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the research programs for seed potatoes, in vitro seed potatoes, potato plants, and postpartum women and to establish a pilot program to provide grants to State substance abuse agencies to promote innovative service delivery models for such women.

S. 2226

At the request of Mr. GARDNER, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2426, a bill to direct the Secretary of State to develop a strategy to obtain observer status for Taiwan in the International Criminal Police Organization, and for other purposes.

S. 2426

At the request of Mr. FLAKE, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2441, a bill to provide that certain Cuban entrants are ineligible to receive refugee assistance, and for other purposes.

S. 2441

At the request of Mr. TESER, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HÉRÍNCHÍK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2468, a bill to require the Secretary of the Interior to carry out a 5-year demonstration program to provide grants to eligible Indian tribes for the construction of tribal schools, and for other purposes.

S. 2468

At the request of Mr. SULLIVAN, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2473, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide veterans the option of using an alternative appeals process to more quickly determine claims for disability compensation, and for other purposes.

S. 2473

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2487, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs and metrics that are effective in treating women veterans as part of the evaluation of such programs by the Secretary, and for other purposes.

S. 2487

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2596, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit veterans who have a service-connected, permanent disability rated as total to travel on military aircraft in the same manner and to the same extent as retired members of the Armed Forces entitled to such travel.

S. 2596

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2621, a bill to amend the Federal Drug, Food, and Cosmetic Act with respect to genetically engineered food transparency and uniformity.

S. 2621

At the request of Mr. MURPHY, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MURPHY) and the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2645, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to foreign persons responsible for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals, and for other purposes.

S. 2645

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 349, a resolution congratulating the Farm Credit System on the celebration of its 100th anniversary.

S. Res. 349

At the request of Mr. SUSSUK, the names of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. KINE) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 350, a resolution recognizing the importance of the United States-Israel economic relationship and encouraging new areas of cooperation.

S. Res. 350

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILSIS), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEEY) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 391, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate to oppose the transfer of foreign enemy combatants from the detention facilities at United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to the United States homeland.

S. Res. 391

At the request of Mr. TESER, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr.
Whereas Greece is a strategic partner and its independence 195 years ago.

Whereas Greece is among the most affected countries. It is no coincidence that the Greek citizens on the islands have been nominated to the Nobel Peace Prize for their generosity in helping people in need.

Whereas the government of Greece has taken important steps in the past few years to further cross-cultural understanding, reappraisal, and cooperation in various fields with Turkey, and has also improved its relations with other countries in the region, including Israel, thus enhancing the stability of the wider region.

Whereas the governments and people of Greece and the United States are at the forefront of efforts to advance freedom, democracy, peace, stability, and human rights.

Whereas educational efforts can help prevent colorectal cancer.

That the Senate—

(1) extends warm congratulations and best wishes to the people of Greece as they celebrate the 195th anniversary of the independence of Greece;

(2) expresses support for the principles of democratic governance to which the people of Greece are committed; and

(3) notes the important role that Greece has played in the wider European region and in the community of nations since gaining its independence 195 years ago.

SENATE RESOLUTION 385—SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF MARCH 2016 AS “NATIONAL COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH”

Mr. ENZI (for himself, Mr. MENENDEZ, and Ms. AYOTTE) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

In the Senate, March 9, 2016.

Whereas colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among men and women combined; and

Whereas colorectal cancer is one of the most prevalent forms of cancer because screening tests can find polyps that can be removed before becoming cancerous.

Whereas colorectal cancer screenings can effectively reduce the incidence of colorectal cancer and mortality, but 1 in 3 adults between the ages of 50 and 75 are not up to date with recommended colorectal cancer screening.

Whereas the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that every individual aged 50 or older had regular screening tests, as many as 60 percent of deaths from colorectal cancer could be prevented.

Whereas the 5-year survival rate for patients with localized colorectal cancer is 90 percent, but only 39 percent of all diagnoses occur at that stage.

Whereas colorectal cancer screenings can effectively reduce the incidence of colorectal cancer and mortality, but 1 in 3 adults between the ages of 50 and 75 are not up to date with recommended colorectal cancer screening.

Whereas public awareness and education campaigns on colorectal cancer prevention, authorize the Attorney General to award grants to address the national epidemics of prescription opioid abuse and heroin use; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3499. Mr. FRANKEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3369 submitted by Mr. CONNYN (for himself and Mr. ALEXANDER) and intended to be proposed to the bill S. 524, to authorize the Attorney General to award grants to address the national epidemics of prescription opioid abuse and heroin use; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TITLE IX—COMPREHENSIVE JUSTICE AND MENTAL HEALTH ACT

SEC. 901. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the “Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act of 2015”.

SEC. 902. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) An estimated 2,000,000 individuals with serious mental illnesses are booked into jails each year, resulting in prevalence rates of serious mental illness in jails that are 3 to 6 times higher than in the general population.

An even greater number of individuals who are detained in jails each year have mental health problems that do not rise to the level of a serious mental illness but may still require a resource-intensive response.
(2) Adults with mental illnesses cycle through jails more often than individuals without mental illnesses, and tend to stay longer (including before trial, during trial, and after sentencing).

(3) According to estimates, almost 1/3 of jail detainees with serious mental illnesses have co-occurring substance use disorders, and individuals with mental disorders are also much more likely to have serious physical health needs.

(a) Among individuals under probation supervision, individuals with mental disorders are nearly twice as likely as other individuals to have their community sentence revoked, or involvement in the criminal justice system. Reasons for revocation may be directly or indirectly related to an individual’s mental disorder.

(b) Sequential Intercept Model—Section 2991 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa) is amended by redesignating subsection (i) as subsection (ii).

(ba) Sequential Intercept Model—Section 2991 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa) is amended by inserting after subsection (b) the following:

(1) SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT GRANTS.—

(A) sequential intercept mapping, which—

(i) shall consist of—

(aa) mapping and implementation in accordance with paragraph (3); and

(bb) identify opportunities for improved collaborative responses to the risks and needs of individuals described in item (aa); and

(ii) development of strategies to scale along multiple intercepts, including—

(aa) emergency and crisis services; and

(bb) specialized police-based responses;

(cc) court hearings and disposition alternatives;

(dd) reentry from jails and prisons; and

(ee) community supervision, treatment and support services; and

(ii) may serve as a starting point for the development of strategic plans to achieve positive public health and safety outcomes; and

(B) implementation, which shall—

(i) be derived from the strategic plans described in subparagraph (A)(ii); and

(ii) consist of—

(1) identifying the eligible entity’s target population;

(2) providing services and supports to reduce unnecessary penetration into the criminal justice system;

(3) reducing recidivism; and

(4) the impact of the eligible entity’s approach; and

(VI) planning for the sustainability of effective interventions.

SEC. 903. VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS.

Section 2991 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa) is amended by inserting after subsection (i), as so added by section 903, the following:

(1) ASSISTING VETERANS.—

(ii) practices that identify and provide treatment, rehabilitation, legal, transitional, and other appropriate services to qualified veterans who have been incarcerated; and

(2) VETERANS TREATMENT COURT PROGRAM.—

The term ‘veterans treatment court program’ means a court program involving collaboration among criminal justice, veterans, and mental health and substance abuse agencies that provides qualified veterans with—

(i) intensive judicial supervision and case management, which may include random and frequent drug testing, where appropriate; and

(ii) a full continuum of treatment services, including mental health services, substance abuse services, medical services, and services to address trauma;

(iii) alternatives to incarceration; and

(iv) other appropriate services, including housing, transportation, mentoring, employment, job training, education, and assistance in applying for and obtaining available benefits.

(b) VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—

(1) DEFINITIONS.—

(A) veterans treatment court programs; and

(B) SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT GRANTS.—

(1) SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT GRANTS.—

(A) sequential intercept mapping, which—

(i) shall consist of—

(aa) mapping and implementation in accordance with paragraph (3); and

(bb) identify opportunities for improved collaborative responses to the risks and needs of individuals described in item (aa); and

(ii) development of strategies to scale along multiple intercepts, including—

(aa) emergency and crisis services; and

(bb) specialized police-based responses;

(cc) court hearings and disposition alternatives;

(dd) reentry from jails and prisons; and

(ee) community supervision, treatment and support services; and

(ii) may serve as a starting point for the development of strategic plans to achieve positive public health and safety outcomes; and

(B) implementation, which shall—

(i) be derived from the strategic plans described in subparagraph (A)(ii); and

(ii) consist of—

(1) identifying the eligible entity’s target population;

(2) providing services and supports to reduce unnecessary penetration into the criminal justice system;

(3) reducing recidivism; and

(4) the impact of the eligible entity’s approach; and

(VI) planning for the sustainability of effective interventions.

SEC. 904. PREVENTION OF LATE ADMISSION TO SOLITARY CONFINEMENT.

Section 2991(b)(5)(I) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(b)(5)(I)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

(2) CORRECTIONAL FACILITY GRANTS.—The Attorney General may make grants under this subsection to applicants to establish or expand—

(1) post-release transition plans for eligible inmates that, in a comprehensive manner, coordinate health, housing, medical, employment, and other appropriate services and public benefits; and

(2) appropriate treatment and services that address the mental health and substance abuse needs of inmates;

(i) to develop, implement, and enhance—

(A) post-release transition plans for eligible inmates that, in a comprehensive manner, coordinate health, housing, medical, employment, and other appropriate services and public benefits; and

(ii) appropriate treatment and services that address the mental health and substance abuse needs of inmates;

(C) to develop, implement, and enhance—

(i) post-release transition plans for eligible inmates that, in a comprehensive manner, coordinate health, housing, medical, employment, and other appropriate services and public benefits; and

(ii) appropriate treatment and services that address the mental health and substance abuse needs of inmates;

(C) to develop, implement, and enhance—

(i) post-release transition plans for eligible inmates that, in a comprehensive manner, coordinate health, housing, medical, employment, and other appropriate services and public benefits; and

(ii) appropriate treatment and services that address the mental health and substance abuse needs of inmates;

(C) to develop, implement, and enhance—

(i) post-release transition plans for eligible inmates that, in a comprehensive manner, coordinate health, housing, medical, employment, and other appropriate services and public benefits; and

(ii) appropriate treatment and services that address the mental health and substance abuse needs of inmates;

(C) to develop, implement, and enhance—

(i) post-release transition plans for eligible inmates that, in a comprehensive manner, coordinate health, housing, medical, employment, and other appropriate services and public benefits; and

(ii) appropriate treatment and services that address the mental health and substance abuse needs of inmates;
subsection, shall give priority to programs that law enforcement personnel and members of the mental health and substance abuse professions develop and administer cooperatively.

SEC. 908. FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall provide direction and guidance for the following:

(1) TRAINING PROGRAMS.—Programs that specialize in and comprehensive training, in procedures to identify and appropriately respond to incidents in which the unique needs of individuals who have a mental illness are involved, to first responders and tactical units—

(A) Federal law enforcement agencies; and

(B) other Federal criminal justice agencies such as the Bureau of Prisons, the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, and other agencies that the Attorney General determines appropriate.

(2) IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY.—The establishment of, or improvement of existing, computerized information systems to provide timely information to employees of Federal law enforcement agencies and other Federal criminal justice agencies to improve the response of such employees to situations involving individuals who have a mental illness.

SEC. 909. GAO REPORT.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States, in coordination with the Attorney General, shall submit to Congress a report on—

(1) the practices that Federal first responders, law enforcement officials, and corrections officers are trained to use in responding to individuals with mental illness;

(2) procedures to identify and appropriately respond to incidents in which the unique needs of individuals who have a mental illness are involved, to Federal first responders and tactical units;

(3) the application of evidence-based practices in criminal justice settings to better address individuals with mental illnesses; and

(4) recommendations on how the Department of Justice can expand and improve information sharing and dissemination of best practices.

SEC. 910. EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICES.

Section 2991(c) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(c)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3), by striking "or" at the end;

(2) by redesignating paragraph (4) as paragraph (6); and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (3), the following:

"'(4) propose interventions that have been shown by empirical evidence to reduce recidivism and a need for treatment and services; or"

"'(5) when appropriate, use validated assessment tools to target preliminarily qualified offenders with a moderate or high risk of recidivism and a need for treatment and services; or"

SEC. 911. TRANSPARENCY, PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ENHANCEMENT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2991(a) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(a)) is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (7); and

(2) by striking paragraph (9) and inserting the following:

"'(9) PRELIMINARILY QUALIFIED OFFENDER.—(A) IN GENERAL.—The term "preliminarily qualified offender" means an offender—

"'(i) previously or currently has been diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional as having a mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders;

"'(ii) manifests obvious signs of mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders during arrest or confinement or before any court; or

"'(iii) in the case of a veterans treatment court program (as defined in section 111 of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (42 U.S.C. 16911)), has been diagnosed by, or manifests obvious signs of, mental illness or a substance abuse disorder or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorder;

"'(B) PROHIBITION.—The term "preliminarily qualified offender" shall not apply if—

"'(i) the defendant's participation in the program; and

"'(ii) has not been charged with or convicted of—

"'(I) any sex offense (as defined in section 111 of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (42 U.S.C. 16911)) or any offense relating to the sexual exploitation of children;

"'(II) murder or assault with intent to commit murder; or

"'(III) any sex offense (as defined in section 111 of such Act) or an offense relating to the sexual exploitation of children;

"'(B) the views of any relevant victims to the offense;

"'(C) the criminal history of the defendant; and

"'(D) whether the defendant satisfies the eligibility criteria for program participation as minimally required by the relevant prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, probation or corrections official, judge and mental health or substance abuse agency representative shall take into account—

"'(i) whether the defendant in the program would pose a substantial risk of violence to the community;

"'(ii) the criminal history of the defendant and the nature and severity of the offense for which the defendant is charged, convicted, and sentenced;

"'(iii) the views of any relevant victims to the offense;

"'(iv) the extent to which the defendant would benefit from participation in the program; and

"'(v) the extent to which the community would realize cost savings because of the defendant's participation in the program; and

"'(vi) whether the defendant satisfies the eligibility criteria for program participation minimally required by the relevant prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, probation or corrections official, judge and mental health or substance abuse agency representative.

(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 2927(2) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797s–6(2)) is amended by striking "has the meaning given that term in section 2991(a)"); and inserting "means an offense that—

"'(A) does not have as an element the use, attempt, or threatened use of physical force against the person or property of another; or

"'(B) is not a felony that by its nature involves a substantial risk that its physical force against the person or property of another may be used in the course of committing the offense;".

SEC. 912. GRANT ACCOUNTABILITY.

Section 2991 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797saa) is amended by inserting after subsection (k), the following:

"'(1) ACCOUNTABILITY.—All grants awarded by the Attorney General under this section shall be subject to the following accountability provisions:

"'(A) REPORT REQUIREMENT.—

"'(B) AUDITS.—Beginning in the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this subsection, and in each fiscal year thereafter, the Inspector General of the Department of Justice shall conduct audits of recipients of grants under this section to determine if the funds were auditable by the Inspector General shall determine the appropriate number of grantees to be audited each year.

"'(C) REIMBURSEMENT.—If an entity is found to have an unresolved audit finding shall not be eligible to receive grant funds under this section during the first 2 fiscal years following the end of the 12-month period described in subparagraph (A).

"'(D) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this section, the Attorney General shall give priority to eligible applicants that did not have an unresolved audit finding during the 3 fiscal years before submitting an application for a grant under this section.

"'(E) REIMBURSEMENT.—If an entity is found to have an unresolved audit finding shall not be eligible to receive grant funds under this section during the first 2 fiscal years following the end of the 12-month period described in subparagraph (A).

"'(F) PRIORITIZATION.—The Attorney General may not award a grant under this section to a nonprofit organization that holds money in offshore accounts for the purpose of avoiding the tax described in section 501(a) of such Code.

"'(G) DISCLOSURE.—Each nonprofit organization that is awarded a grant under this section and uses the proceeds prescribed in regulations to create the presumption of reasonableness for the compensation of its officers, directors, trustees, and key employees, shall disclose to the Attorney General in the application for the grant the process for determining such compensation, including the independent persons involved.
in reviewing and approving such compensation, the comparability data used, and contemporaneous substantiation of the deliberation and decision. Upon request, the Attorney General shall provide the information disclosed under this subparagraph available for public inspection.

(3) CONFERENCES EXPENDITURES.—(A) Amounts made available to the Department of Justice under this section may be used by the Attorney General, or by any individual or entity awarded discretionary funds through a cooperative agreement under this section, to host or support any expenditure for conferences that use more than $20,000 in funds made available to the Department of Justice, unless the head of the relevant agency or department, provides prior written authorization that the funds may be expended to host the conference.

(4) ANNUAL CERTIFICATION.—Beginning in the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Attorney General shall submit to the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, an annual certification—

(A) indicating whether—

(i) all audits issued by the Office of the Inspector General under paragraph (1) have been completed and reviewed by the appropriate Assistant Attorney General or Director;

(ii) all mandatory exclusions required under paragraph (1)(C) have been issued; and

(iii) all reimbursements required under paragraph (1)(E) have been made; and

(B) indicating—

(i) any audit reports issued by the Inspector General under paragraph (1) that have not been completed and reviewed by the appropriate Assistant Attorney General or Director;

(ii) any mandatory exclusions required under paragraph (1)(C) that have not been issued;

(iii) any reimbursements required under paragraph (1)(E) that have not been made;

(iv) any Federal agreements under paragraph (1)(B) that have not been entered into; and

(v) any Federal agreements under paragraph (1)(C) that have not been entered into.

SEC. 913. REAUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

Subsection (n) of section 2991 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797a(a), as redesignated by section 903(a), is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in subparagraph (B), by striking “and” at the end;

(B) in subparagraph (C), by striking the period and inserting “; and”;

and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(D) $18,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2016 through 2020.”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(3) LIMITATION.—Not more than 28 percent of the funds appropriated under this section may be used for purposes described in subsection (j) (relating to veterans).”.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. VITTER. 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 March 9, 2016, at 10 a.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. VITTER. 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 March 9, 2016, at 10 a.m., in room SD-106 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled “Cooperative Federalism: State Perspectives on EPA Regulatory Actions and the Role of States as Co-Regulators.”

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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 9, 2016, at 10 a.m., in room SD-360 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled “The President’s FY2017 Indian Country Budget.”

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

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 9, 2016, in room SD-628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled “The President’s FY2017 Indian Country Budget.”

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

COMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Strategic Forces be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 9, 2016, at 2:30 p.m.

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

NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 376.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 376) designating the first week of April 2016 as “National Asbestos Awareness Week.”

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 376) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of February 25, 2016, under “Submitted Resolutions.”
SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF MARCH 2016 AS “NATIONAL COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH”

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 395, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 395) supporting the designation of March 2016, as “National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.”

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 395) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today’s Record under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2016

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Thursday, March 10; 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; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business until 11:15 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each; further, that following morning business, the Senate resume consideration of S. 524; further, that notwithstanding the provisions of Rule XXII, all postcloture time on S. 524 expire at 11:30 a.m.; finally, that the time following morning business until 11:30 a.m. be equitably divided between the two managers or their designees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 Senators INHOFE and SULLIVAN.

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

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

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

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I am rising now to respond to a statement that was made by our good friend from Illinois a few minutes ago, to clarify. It is kind of interesting that we look back and we find that when the Republicans had someone in the White House and the Democrats were trying to block a nomination, it was just the opposite as it is today. In fact, at that time, the Senators in the leadership of the Democrats—Obama, Biden, Clinton, Schumer, and Reid—all made the statement, a joint statement that the Senate does not have to confirm Presidential nominations and urged that the Senate refuse to do so, especially in an election year.

Now, just the opposite is what the Senator said, but I don’t blame them. I don’t blame any Democrat for trying their best to get a nominee from this President because, as a Democrat, they are more liberal than Republicans are, and they are very much to have a chance to change the balance of the U.S. Supreme Court, which has been consistent in recent years in objecting to some of the extremist left programs. So I can’t blame them for trying, and I’m not going to go, you know, where that is to going to work.

I applaud the leader. At the time the death—the sad death—of Scalia took place, he was in a position where we were in recess and so he had to make a decision and the decision was the right decision.

Anyway, I wish to share a couple of letters with you that came from my State of Oklahoma.

I will give the names and addresses, if anyone wants to check. This is what some of the people are inside the beltway, get out of Washington, DC, and get back to States such as Oklahoma, these are the concerns they have. I want to read the first one. This is from a guy named Robert from Tulsa, OK. It came right after the sad death of Justice Scalia. He said:

Dear Senator Inhofe,

I am contacting you in regards to the loss of Justice Scalia and his replacement. Justice Scalia was a brilliant man and a true patriot. Unfortunately, I do not feel any appointee by the President would follow the Constitution and serve with the same virtus as Justice Scalia. I am asking that you and the other members of the Senate confirm a new Justice until the election, when the newly elected President can make the appointment. We have sent you to Washington to stop the agenda of the President that runs contrary to the wishes of the country. Please stand on your principles and do not allow the President to appoint another Justice that may be detrimental to our freedoms for decades to come. Thank you.

That is from Matthew from Claremore, OK. Let me assure you, of the hundreds of letters we have received, I have read them. I have no intention of changing the pattern that has been in existence since 1886 and allow a President, during an election year, to make such a nomination.

So I think we did the right thing. I think it would have been inappropriate to have given them a chance to have hearings. I have been hearing from colleagues and the press that knowing that it was not going to confirm a nominee, I don’t think that would be fair to the nominee.

So these are just a few examples of the hundreds of letters and calls from constituents that I have received, asking that the Senate wait to confirm the next Supreme Court nominee until we have a new President.

We have heard from our colleagues and pundits on the other side—the Democrats, the other side of the aisle—that it is our country’s interest to confirm President Obama’s nominations.

The Constitution says, and it says very clearly, that the President “. . . shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint . . . Judges of the supreme Court.”

The Senate clearly has a role in this process, and the Senate can either give its consent or it can withhold its consent, and completely fulfill its constitutional duties. So it doesn’t make any difference. We have the latitude of making a determination, and we are

Another letter just came from Chickasha, OK, from Donald. He says:

Dear Senator Inhofe,

I have just received word of the death of Justice Scalia. I am so sad at what a loss the conservative movement, but I am sad for the conservative movement, but I am also sad because it also puts our country in peril.

With Scalia gone, President Obama will certainly present a nominee for his seat. If it is true that he has progressive ideals and agenda, it could mean grave danger for our Constitution.

I urge you to hold fast and refuse to confirm any Obama appointee to the Court. Hold out until he is out of office. I feel the future of our nation depends on it.

That is from Donald of Chickasha, OK.

Next is a letter from Matthew of Claremore, OK. Claremore is one of the towns where our famous Will Rogers spent his childhood. Everyone has heard of Will Rogers—a great guy. Matthew said:

Senator Inhofe,

I am contacting you in regards to the loss of Justice Scalia and his replacement. Justice Scalia was a brilliant man and a true patriot. Unfortunately, I do not feel any appointee by the President would follow the Constitution and serve with the same virtus as Justice Scalia. I am asking that you and the other members of the Senate confirm a new Justice until the election, when the newly elected President can make the appointment. We have sent you to Washington to stop the agenda of the President that runs contrary to the wishes of the country. Please stand on your principles and do not allow the President to appoint another Justice that may be detrimental to our freedoms for decades to come. Thank you.

That is from Matthew from Claremore, OK. Let me assure you, of the hundreds of letters we have received, I have read them. I have no intention of changing the pattern that has been in existence since 1886 and allow a President, during an election year, to make such a nomination.

So I think we did the right thing. I think it would have been inappropriate to have given them a chance to have hearings. I have been hearing from colleagues and the press that knowing that it was not going to confirm a nominee, I don’t think that would be fair to the nominee.

So these are just a few examples of the hundreds of letters and calls from constituents that I have received, asking that the Senate wait to confirm the next Supreme Court nominee until we have a new President.

We have heard from our colleagues and pundits on the other side—the Democrats, the other side of the aisle—that it is our country’s interest to confirm President Obama’s nominations.

The Constitution says, and it says very clearly, that the President “. . . shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint . . . Judges of the supreme Court.”

The Senate clearly has a role in this process, and the Senate can either give its consent or it can withhold its consent, and completely fulfill its constitutional duties. So it doesn’t make any difference. We have the latitude of making a determination, and we are
going to do it. It wasn’t long ago when the Democrats were singing a different tune when the Republican was in the White House, and that would have been President Bush at that time. Some of the Democrats on the floor said that the Senate does not have to confirm Presidential nominations and urged that the Senate refuse to do so, especially in an election year.

The Democrats were saying that, so it is just the opposite of what they are saying today. In fact, the leadership who was in control at that time was none other than Senators Obama, he was a Senator at that time; and, Clinton, she was a Senator at that time; and Senators SCHUMER and REID. They all made the same statement. They said the Senate does not have to confirm Presidential nominations and urged that the Senate refuse to do so, especially in an election year.

Now, that is where there is a difference. So, actually the last time it was done in an election year was 1888. You have to go all the way back to 1888—128 years before you find a similar situation to the one we are in today. That is the last time a vacancy occurred in an election year and was filled by the Senate from a party on the opposite side of the President. That is the last time that happened, 1888, and we are not about to change that now.

FURTHER, it is even if this were not true, this President hasn’t worked with Congress on much of anything. So why should we work with him on this?

That is not the point. The point is, we don’t have to do that, and when the Democrats were in control of the Senate and the Republicans had the White House, they made it very clear the leadership said the Senate does not have to confirm a Presidential nomination, and they urged us not to do it. And they turned now.

Now why is this important? We have seen time and again when President Obama is not able to get his liberal agenda through Congress, he has turned to Executive action and to agency rulemaking to implement priorities. These regulations are actually making their way through our courts and are either going to be heard by the Supreme Court or have already been heard by the Supreme Court.

President Obama’s Executive amnesties were stayed by the lower courts, and the Supreme Court will decide this term if that injunction will stand or not.

What we are saying is this: The President has a very liberal agenda on almost every social issue, every fiscal issue, every military issue. It is a very liberal agenda. So when the President can’t get things done through legislation, he then turns around and tries to do it through regulation.

I will give an example. If you talk to the American Farm Bureau right now, they will tell you the greatest problem farmers and ranchers have—I know this because I am from the farm State of Oklahoma— is not anything in the Agriculture bill. It is the overregulation of the EPA. Of all the regulations that are damaging to farmers and ranchers in America, the one they single out the most is the WOTUS rule; that is, the waters of the United States.

Historically, it has always been in the jurisdiction of the States as to how to control and manage the waters of the United States where it is navigable wells. Well, we understand that. We understand that is where the Federal Government should be involved. But 6 years ago there was a lot of legislation and one bill in particular that was omnibus in the House and the Senate that would take the word “navigable” out. That being the case, that would mean all the waters in a jurisdiction would go from the States to the Federal Government, and we never did pass that happen. But this is what is going on right now. Things they have tried to get passed through legislation and haven’t been able to do, they are trying to do through regulation.

If the Supreme Court is split 4 to 4 in these two cases I just mentioned, the injunctions of the lower courts will stand until the underlying issues are fully litigated. That is what they are waiting for. The Supreme Court has said that until the litigation is cleared up, we are not going to act on this rule. Well, as you know, that is going to take a long time for that to happen.

The Clean Power Plan is the other one. You are not going to give a little background—that going back to the year 2000, which is when all this global warming started and the end of the world was coming, they were introducing legislation at that time to have a cap and trade to limit the emissions of CO₂ throughout America.

When people realized how much that would cost and the fact that the science was not yet settled, it was defeated. And when it got to the Senate, it was defeated. I am talking about through legislation trying to do a cap and trade in America.

One of the interesting things was that the first Director of the EPA that was appointed by this President was Lisa Jackson. I asked her a question in a hearing that was on the record and live on TV. I said: If we were to pass either this legislation or cap and trade or do it by regulation in the United States, would that have the effect of lowering the emissions of CO₂ worldwide? She said: No, because this isn’t where the problem is. The problem is in China. The problem is in India. The problem is in India. The problem is in India.

So we went through that whole thing, and the President, when he came into office, decided: Well, they are never going to pass this by the elected representatives of the people, so we will do it by regulation. So he came out with the Clean Power Plan.

The Clean Power Plan is what President Obama came up with, and it essentially does the same thing as legislation would do when it would perform cap and trade for the States. We remember the trip to Paris. When he got to Paris, he was unable to get anyone to do anything.

But if they came up with was kind of humorous because China said: No, we are going to continue our emissions until 2025; at that time, we will start lowering our emissions. They were not going to do it, and they are not going to do it. But nonetheless, that was the Clean Power Plan, and it was essentially the same thing that was killed by legislation.

The Clean Power Plan would cost about $292 billion, and it mandates carbon dioxide cuts from the power sector to meet the President’s standards. President Obama said in Paris that we are going to lower our CO₂ emissions between 26 and 28 percent by 2025. Now, he never said how we would do that—never. He never did say how we were going to do it. And, one thing is, if that were to happen, he was going to try to do that and, obviously, that was something that would not have worked.

These and other Executive actions and regulations will have a big impact on our people and our economy and will all likely be decided by the Supreme Court. That is where I get back to the Supreme Court. The Clean Power Plan would then be decided. Right now on the Clean Power Plan, the case is a stay that has gone to the U.S. Supreme Court on the Clean Power Plan until all of the litigation that is pending right now can be settled. That could be a long time—certainly way past this particular Presidency.

It is not just the Executive actions he has taken but the moral direction of our country too. Just last week, the Supreme Court heard a case challenging the State of Texas on its new abortion regulations that require that clinics meet the standard of other outpatient surgical clinics and mandates that abortion doctors have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals. That is the Supreme Court. That is the type of thing you would see if the liberals would have their way and if the Supreme Court would change its direction.

Many of these decisions are 5-to-4 decisions, and that is why I say this is an important decision. It is the American people who will bear the burden of these decisions and, therefore, they should have a say in who would fill Justice Scalia’s vacancy. So this decision should be made by the next President. Let a new President decide who should replace Justice Scalia. That is exactly what is going to happen.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I know today we have been focusing on a really important bill, the CARA bill, which has been led by Senator PORTMAN, Senator AYOTTE, and many others. It is a very important bill for our country, for our States like Alaska that are seeing this explosion of opioid use, heroin use, and drug addiction that is impacting so many families. I had the opportunity to talk about this, when I was home in Alaska last week down in Juneau, in front of our State legislature.

This legislation is showing bipartisan work, which is very important to the country and very important to States like Alaska. I am certainly proud to be a cosponsor of that bill. We are going to keep working and we will continue to try to get that over the goal line.

I think it is important to focus on issues not only domestically, of course, but issues beyond our borders as well. What I want to talk about in terms of these kinds of issues this afternoon is the issue of American leadership in the world today.

A lot of us in the Senate have experience in foreign policy and national security issues. There have been Members who have served in the State Department, decades in the military—the Presiding Officer has a lot of experience in international business—and so we have a fair amount of experience here. Certainly, it is part of our responsibilities under the Constitution, as Senators, to be very focused on these issues—these important issues of national security, of foreign policy. Attending hearings, codels, and meetings with foreign leaders are all part of our responsibilities.

One thing is very clear. Foreign policy and national security issues are almost always more complicated, never really have nice solutions, and often very opaque in terms of what is happening in the world and how it impacts the United States. We recognize that. That is usually the case. But sometimes in the world of foreign policy, sometimes in the world of national security, there are moments of clarity when big issues come into focus. It doesn’t happen often. It is rare. But when it happens, you know it. When it happens, you seize it.

I was recently part of a bipartisan congressional delegation led by one of the foremost experts on foreign policy and national security in the Senate, Senator Joe Lieberman, who graced this body with his knowledge and expertise and wisdom for many, many years—a Democrat—was in Munich. For over 50 years, this has been where leaders have come together—Americans, certainly, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Defense Ministers, international affairs experts—to discuss national security and foreign policy issues, usually as it relates to the Atlantic partnership—NATO, the EU.

My experience there led to one of these clarifying moments, and I think I am speaking for many of the people who were at Munich about 3 weeks ago. Here is the clarifying moment: The United States is withdrawing from its traditional leadership role in the world. Our allies know it, they feel it, and they are desperately worried about it.

In meeting after meeting, in speech after speech, if you were in Munich a month ago, listening, paying attention, you would see, hear this world’s security with our allies, you heard it. You heard it. Sometimes it was subtle, sometimes it was direct, and, occasionally, it was even pleading—pleading from our allies, pleading for American leadership in the world again. We saw that.

One of the meetings we had was with an important leader of an important country in Europe. The Presiding Officer and I were there. At the end of the meeting, this leader was asked: What can the United States do to help your country in terms of security—aid, military cooperation? What can we do? This leader looked at a group of several Senators, bipartisan, and said: The United States has to lead in the world again. You are not leading, and the world is becoming a much more dangerous place because of the lack of American leadership. Whoever the next leader of your great country is, please tell that person that the United States has to lead again.

Think about that. That was the message. That was the message from Munich. Our friends are worried. They have certainly lost confidence in us, and our adversaries are taking advantage of the vacuum that we have left all around the world. That was the message of Munich, and anyone who went there heard it.

Now, I know some of my colleagues might be thinking: Well, this is a Republican Senator on the floor of the Senate, criticizing the Obama administration. That is probably a partisan criticism. But there were many people at Munich. There were Republicans and Democrats at Munich. Just a perusal of newspaper articles from those who went—and some who weren’t there—shows that all are writing about the same issue—that one of the principal foreign policy issues facing the world, facing the United States right now, is what the lack of U.S. leadership globally is doing to the national security of our country and to that of our allies.

Let me just provide a few examples. Senator Joe Lieberman, who graced this body with his knowledge and expertise and wisdom for many, many years—a Democrat—was in Munich. Not too long leading back, he wrote in the Washington Post:

The world has never seemed as dangerous and leaderless as it does now. Only the extremists and bullies act badly, and therefore they have seized the world. It’s a moment in history that invokes the haunting words of W.B. Yeats: “The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.”

That was Senator Lieberman, who was with us in Munich just a couple of weeks ago.

Former Under Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice—a great career foreign service officer. He also stated: “We are being humiliated. We’ve lost our strategic foothold”—he is talking about the Middle East—and “we’ve abdicated our leadership.” That is not a Republican partisan saying that. GEN John Abizaid—in my view one of the premier military leaders our country has seen in a generation, whom I had the honor of serving with as a marine major—recently stated: “Without American leadership, we’re not going to move in a direction that’s going to produce effective results.”

There was another article in the Washington Post by another observer, an expert on foreign policy issues, Fred Hiatt, who wrote about what he saw at Munich. What he stated was that the endless negotiation by our Secretary of State that is continually, and falsely, holds out the prospect of imminent progress on so many different issues ends up “providing cover” and “is an excuse for inaction,” an anesthetic, he said, where the Congress and the American people don’t even have to feel about focusing on these issues, what is going on in the Middle East or the South China Sea or North Korea or the Korean Peninsula because we have endless diplomacy that covers it.

Finally, another participant in Munich, former Senator Bill Cohen, who worked as the Secretary of Defense for President Clinton, stated: “We no longer seem to know what our role should be in the new situation.”

He was interviewed on the radio a couple of weeks ago right after Munich: Are we going to lead from behind? The truth is that President Putin has been bombarding and the United States has been dithering.

That is former Secretary of Defense Bill Cohen, former U.S. Senator Bill Cohen.

It is very clear, whether you are Democratic or Republican, that anyone who spent time at a Munich security conference a few weeks ago came away with a similar conclusion: Our allies are extremely worried about what is clearly happening—the withdrawal of U.S. leadership from the world. They are seeing it, and we are seeing it in almost every region of the world. It is leaving a vacuum. Other countries that don’t share our interests and don’t share our values are filling that vacuum. We know the list. We have been debating it on this floor. Russia—Russia.

Whether in the Middle East, Syria, Ukraine, the Arctic, Iran, the world’s largest state sponsor of terrorism—our diplomats and Secretary of
State seem to spend more time with their diplomats and their Foreign Minister than almost any other country in the world—China and the South China Sea.

In the face of these challenges, we are also starting to see something that is truly alarming. The postwar structure, the national security structure of the world that the United States was instrumental in building, is beginning to crumble in different parts of the world.

So what should we do? What can we do? I think there is a lot we can do. We can certainly bolster the American-led order that was established after World War II. It certainly does not have to crumble. This is what our colleague Senator MCCAIN laid out in his outstanding speech in Munich. He talked about how this is one of our most important inheritances, this world order, this American-led order, and how we need to focus on it—not with speeches but with action.

What else can we do? We can look at the changing landscape of the world and see if we need to devise new political structures that address new challenges in places such as the Middle East, where borders seem to be being erased on a daily basis by terrorist groups like ISIS. This is something General Abizaid has written about recently.

Both of these alternatives require American leadership. They are not going to happen without the United States in the lead. If you went to Munich, you realize their allies want us to lead.

What can we do in the Senate? Well, we can certainly press for a more assertive and leading role for the United States of America from this body. The Constitution gives the U.S. Senate significant power in national security matters and foreign affairs, and we should be using that. We are using that.

Under the new leadership of the Senate, we have been moving forward in many areas of foreign policy and national security. There are the North Korea sanctions that were passed by this body 2 weeks ago, and now the world is following our lead on that. Senators GARDNER and CORKER did an outstanding job in that regard. There is the bipartisan approach to Ukraine that we see on the Armed Services Committee. Every Member of that body, Democratic and Republican, thinks we should be doing more to help the Ukrainians defend themselves against Russian aggression. Afghanistan, the same thing—bolstering the need for troops there to guard America’s security. The President has seemingly wanted to take all our troops out of there, as he wanted to do in Iraq, but again a bipartisan group of Senators have been questioning that strategy on a daily basis. In the South China Sea, we have been encouraging the administration to do what we have been doing for 70 years—conducting freedom of navigation operations to keep the seaways of the world open. These are all things the Senate has been doing—in essence, trying to give this administration backbone, to assert the leadership we know is so important to our security and the security of the world.

But there is another thing, another option that might be out there. We can ignore the problem of what is happening in the world. I hate to say this, but if you saw Secretary of State Kerry’s speech in Munich, certainly compared to Senator McCAIN’s keynote address, what the Secretary of State seemed to be doing was that fourth option. He seemed to be saying: Hey, things aren’t going that badly. Things in Syria aren’t that bad. He cautioned against pessimism and said that we have good reasons to be optimistic about what is happening. He talked about how fewer people are dying in conflict today than ever before. You literally heard a gasp in the audience in Munich when that was stated. That is not true.

What this does when you have the Secretary of State making these kinds of statements at important security conferences with all our allies, it further undermines the credibility of the United States in terms of foreign policy and national security.

We need to lead again. Our allies want us to. Most importantly, I believe the American people want us to.

Why? Why shouldn’t we just withdraw from the world and let everything catch on fire? Bring the troops home and have the two oceans protect us—the Atlantic and Pacific.

We need to lead, and I believe the American people want the United States to lead because they know that when the United States leads in the world, it is a safer place abroad and it is a safer place at home. They know what Senator Lieberman said recently in his op-ed after Munich: “The absence of American leadership has certainly not caused all the instability, but it has encouraged and exacerbated it.” The American people also know that when there is a lack of U.S. leadership in the world, it not only turns to undermining our national security interests, but it turns to humiliation for our own citizens. Just think of the photos that we saw recently of U.S. sailors on their knees at Iranian gunpoint with their hands raised in surrender and what that does in terms of how Americans are thinking about our role in the world, the security of the world, and what is happening with regard to U.S. leadership. We have to change these policies of leading from behind.

I will conclude by mentioning in terms of this lack of U.S. leadership what I fear the most. I started by saying that we were at a conference where our allies directly, indirectly were asking for American leadership once again. But what I fear the most is the day that a group of bipartisan Senators goes to another conference like Munich or the Shangri-la Dialogue and we don’t hear from our allies, we don’t hear them asking for us to lead once again, because such silence will truly be dangerous indeed because that is when we will know that our traditional allies have given up on the United States; that is when we will know that our traditional allies have lost faith in America and have begun the process of making accommodations with our adversaries. We in the Senate must do all in our power to make sure that situation where we lose our allies, where they don’t ask for our leadership, does not happen.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:40 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, March 10, 2016, at 9:30 a.m.
SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate of February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, March 10, 2016 may be found in the Daily Digest of today’s RECORD.
10 a.m.
Committee on Finance
To hold hearings to examine HealthCare.gov, focusing on a review of operations and enrollment. SD-215

Committee on Foreign Relations
To hold hearings to examine the Administration’s nuclear agenda. SD-419

3 p.m.
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
To hold hearings to examine S. 2177 and H.R. 958, bills to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the Medgar Evers House, located in Jackson, Mississippi, S. 651 and H.R. 1289, bills to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire certain land in Martinez, California, for inclusion in the John Muir National Historic Site, H.R. 1949, to provide for the consideration and submission of site and design proposals for the National Liberty Memorial approved for establishment in the District of Columbia, S. 1949, and H.R. 2289, bills to remove the use restrictions on certain land transferred to Rockingham County, Virginia, H.R. 2880, to redesignate the Martin Luther King, Junior, National Historic Site in the State of Georgia, S. 1930 and H.R. 3371, bills to adjust the boundary of the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park to include the Walls House and Harleston Hill, S. 119, to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for a lifetime National Recreational Pass for any veteran with a service-connected disability, S. 718, to modify the boundary of Petersburg National Battlefield in the Commonwealth of Virginia, S. 770, to authorize Escambia County, Florida, to convey certain property that was formerly part of Santa Rosa Island National Monument and that was conveyed to Escambia County subject to restrictions on use and reconveyance, S. 1577, to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain segments of East Rosebud Creek in Carbon County, Montana, as components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, S. 1943, to modify the boundary of the Shiloh National Military Park located in the State of Tennessee and Mississippi, to establish Parker’s Crossroads Battlefield as an affiliated area of the National Park System, S. 1975, to establish the Sewall-Belmont House National Historic Site as a unit of the National Park System, S. 1982, to authorize a Wall of Remembrance as part of the Korean War Veterans Memorial and to allow certain private contributions to fund the Wall of Remembrance, S. 1953, to establish the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps to place youth and veterans in the United States in national service positions to protect, restore, and enhance the great outdoors of the United States, S. 2039, to designate the mountain at the Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming, as Devils Tower, S. 261, to designate a National Memorial to Fallen Educators at the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia, Kansas, S. 2009, to amend title 54, United States Code, to establish within the National Park Service the U.S. Civil Rights Network, S. 2668, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to place signage on Federal land along the trail known as the “American Discovery Trail”, S. 2620, to facilitate the addition of park administration at the Coltville National Historical Park, S. 2628, to authorize the National Emergency Medical Services Memorial Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs, SD-366.
Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S1351–S1396

Measures Introduced: Five bills and two resolutions were introduced, as follows: S. 2655–2659, and S. Res. 394–395. Pages S1387–88

Measures Reported:

S. 1443, to amend the Indian Employment, Training and Related Services Demonstration Act of 1992 to facilitate the ability of Indian tribes to integrate the employment, training, and related services from diverse Federal sources. (S. Rept. No. 114–225) Page S1387

Measures Passed:

National Asbestos Awareness Week: Committee on the Judiciary was discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 376, designating the first week of April 2016 as “National Asbestos Awareness Week”, and the resolution was then agreed to. Page S1392

National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month: Senate agreed to S. Res. 395, supporting the designation of March 2016, as “National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month”. Page S1393

Measures Considered:

Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act—Agreement: Senate continued consideration of S. 524, to authorize the Attorney General to award grants to address the national epidemics of prescription opioid abuse and heroin use, taking action on the following amendments proposed thereto:

Adopted:

Grassley (for Donnelly/Capito) Modified Amendment No. 3374 (to Amendment No. 3378), to provide follow-up services to individuals who have received opioid overdose reversal drugs. Pages S1357, S1361

Grassley Amendment No. 3378, in the nature of a substitute. Pages S1357, S1361

During consideration of this measure today, Senate also took the following action:

By 93 yeas to 3 nays (Vote No. 33), three-fifths of those Senators duly chosen and sworn, having voted in the affirmative, Senate agreed to the motion to close further debate on the bill. Page S1361

A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing for further consideration of the bill, post-closure, at 11:15 a.m., on Thursday, March 10, 2016; notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, all post-closure time on the bill expire at 11:30 a.m.; and that the time following morning business until 11:30 a.m. be equally divided between the two managers, or their designees. Page S1393

Executive Communications:

Petitions and Memorials:

Executive Reports of Committees:

Additional Cosponsors:

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions:

Adopted:

Grassley Amendment No. 3378, in the nature of a substitute. Pages S1357, S1361

Additional Statements:

Amendments Submitted:

Authorities for Committees to Meet:

Privileges of the Floor:

Record Votes: One record vote was taken today. (Total—33) Page S1361

Adjournment: Senate convened at 9:30 a.m. and adjourned at 6:40 p.m., until 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 10, 2016. (For Senate’s program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today’s Record on page S1393.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

APPROPRIATIONS: INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2017 for the Indian Health Service, after receiving testimony from Mary Smith, Principal Deputy Director, Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services.
APPROPRIATIONS: DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM


APPROPRIATIONS: DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2017 for the Department of Agriculture, after receiving testimony from Thomas Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture.

APPROPRIATIONS: DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2017 for the Department of Energy, after receiving testimony from Ernest J. Moniz, Secretary of Energy.

NOMINATIONS

Committee on Armed Services: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of General Joseph L. Votel, USA, for reappointment to the grade of general and to be Commander, United States Central Command, and Lieutenant General Raymond A. Thomas III, USA, to be general and Commander, United States Special Operations Command, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

DOD SECURITY COOPERATION, ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, AND AUTHORITIES

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities concluded a hearing to examine the Department of Defense security cooperation and assistance programs and authorities, after receiving testimony from Commander Jeff Eggers, USN (Ret.), New America, Melissa Dalton, Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Michael J. McNerney, RAND Corporation, all of Washington, D.C.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST AND FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Strategic Forces concluded a closed hearing to examine military space threats and programs in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2017 and the Future Years Defense Program, after receiving testimony from General John E. Hyten, USAF, Commander, Air Force Space Command, and Douglas L. Loverro, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Space Policy, both of the Department of Defense; and Troy E. Meink, Assistant Director of National Intelligence for Systems and Resource Analyses.

EPA REGULATORY ACTIONS

Committee on Environment and Public Works: Committee concluded a hearing to examine cooperative federalism, focusing on state perspectives on Environmental Protection Agency regulatory actions and the role of states as co-regulators, after receiving testimony from Steven Pirner, South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Pierre; Becky Keogh, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, North Little Rock; Randy C. Huffman, West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, Charleston; Deb Markowitz, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Montpelier; and Ali Mirzakhahili, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Division of Air Quality, Dover.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Committee ordered favorably reported the following business items:

- S. 1878, to extend the pediatric priority review voucher program, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 1077, to provide for expedited development of and priority review for breakthrough devices, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 1101, to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to provide for the regulation of patient records and certain decision support software, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 2055, to amend the Public Health Service Act and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to national health security, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 1767, to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to combination products, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 1597, to enhance patient engagement in the medical product development process, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
S. 2512, to expand the tropical disease product priority review voucher program to encourage treatments for Zika virus, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute; and

The nomination of John B. King, of New York, to be Secretary of Education.

INDIAN COUNTRY BUDGET
Committee on Indian Affairs: Committee concluded an oversight hearing to examine the President’s proposed budget request for fiscal year 2017 for Indian Country, after receiving testimony from Karol V. Mason, Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs, Department of Justice; Lawrence S. Roberts, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs; Lourdes Castro Ramirez, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for Public and Indian Housing; Mary Smith, Principal Deputy Director, Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services; and Aaron Payment, National Congress of American Indians, Washington, D.C.

DOJ OVERSIGHT
Committee on the Judiciary: Committee concluded an oversight hearing to examine the Department of Justice, after receiving testimony from Loretta E. Lynch, Attorney General, Department of Justice.

ANTITRUST LAWS OVERSIGHT
Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights concluded an oversight hearing to examine the enforcement of the antitrust laws, including S. 2102, to amend the Clayton Act and the Federal Trade Commission Act to provide that the Federal Trade Commission shall exercise authority with respect to mergers only under the Clayton Act and only in the same procedural manner as the Attorney General exercises such authority, after receiving testimony from Bill Baer, Assistant Attorney General, Antitrust Division, Department of Justice; and Edith Ramirez, Chairwoman, Federal Trade Commission.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action
The House was not in session today. The House is scheduled to meet in a Pro Forma session at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 10, 2016.

Committee Meetings
No hearings were held.

Joint Meetings
No joint committee meetings were held.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2016

Senate
Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2017 for the Department of Education, 10 a.m., SD–138.
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2017 for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 10:30 a.m., SD–192.

House of Representatives

Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2018 for the Department of Veterans Affairs, 11 a.m., SD–124.
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2017 for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2:30 p.m., SD–192.
Committee on Armed Services: to hold hearings to examine United States Strategic Command, United States Northern Command, and United States Southern Command programs and budget in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2017 and the Future Years Defense Program; with the possibility of a closed session following the open session in SVC–217, 10 a.m., SD–G50.
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: business meeting to consider the nomination of Adam J. Szubin, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes, Department of the Treasury, Time to be announced, S–216, Capitol.
Committee on Foreign Relations: business meeting to consider S. 1252, to authorize a comprehensive strategic approach for United States foreign assistance to developing countries to reduce global poverty and hunger, achieve food and nutrition security, promote inclusive, sustainable, agricultural-led economic growth, improve nutritional outcomes, especially for women and children, build
resilience among vulnerable populations, S. Res. 375, raising awareness of modern slavery, S. Res. 368, supporting efforts by the Government of Colombia to pursue peace and the end of the country’s enduring internal armed conflict and recognizing United States support for Colombia at the 15th anniversary of Plan Colombia, S. Res. 378, expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the courageous work and life of Russian opposition leader Boris Yefimovich Nemtsov and renewing the call for a full and transparent investigation into the tragic murder of Boris Yefimovich Nemtsov in Moscow on February 27, 2015, S. Res. 388, supporting the goals of International Women’s Day, S. Res. 370, recognizing that for nearly 40 years, the United States and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have worked toward stability, prosperity, and peace in Southeast Asia, an original resolution that expresses profound concern over the prosecution and conviction of former President Mohamed Nasheed without due process and urges the Government of the Maldives to take all necessary steps to redress this injustice, release all political prisoners, and to ensure due process and freedom from political prosecution for all the people of the Maldives, and the nominations of Catherine Ann Novelli, of Virginia, to be Alternate Governor of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Marcela Escobarí, of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, and Karen Brevard Stewart, of Florida, to be Ambassador to the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Amos J. Hochstein, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary (Energy Resources), Robert Annan Riley III, of Florida, to be Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia, Matthew John Matthews, of Oregon, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Senior Official for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum, and routine lists in the Foreign Service, all of the Department of State; to be immediately followed by a hearing to examine the nominations of Mark Sobel, of Virginia, to be Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund for a term of two years, R. David Harden, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, and Stephen Michael Schwartz, of Maryland, to be Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Somalia, Kelly Keiderling-Franz, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, Elizabeth Holzhall Richard, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Lebanese Republic, Christine Ann Elder, of Kentucky, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia, and Adam H. Sterling, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Slovak Republic, all of the Department of State, 10 a.m., SD–419.

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, to hold hearings to examine the Affordable Care Act health insurance Consumer Operated and Oriented Plan program, 9:30 a.m., SD–342.

Committee on the Judiciary: business meeting to consider S. 247, to amend section 349 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to deem specified activities in support of terrorism as renunciation of United States nationality, S. 2390, to provide adequate protections for whistleblowers at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, S. 2613, to reauthorize certain programs established by the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, S. 2614, to amend the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, to reauthorize the Missing Alzheimer’s Disease Patient Alert Program, and to promote initiatives that will reduce the risk of injury and death relating to the wandering characteristics of some children with autism, and the nominations of Elizabeth J. Drake, of Maryland, Jennifer Choe Groves, of Virginia, and Gary Stephen Katzmann, of Massachusetts, each to be a Judge of the United States Court of International Trade, and Clare E. Connors, to be United States District Judge for the District of Hawaii, 10 a.m., SD–226.

Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship: to hold hearings to examine the commercial applications of unmanned aircraft for small businesses, 10 a.m., SR–428A.

Select Committee on Intelligence: to hold closed hearings to examine certain intelligence matters, 2 p.m., SH–219.

House

No hearings are scheduled.
Next Meeting of the SENATE
9:30 a.m., Thursday, March 10

Senate Chamber
Program for Thursday: After the transaction of any morning business (not to extend beyond 11:15 a.m.), Senate will continue consideration of S. 524, Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, post-cloture. At 11:30 a.m., all post-cloture time on the bill will expire, and Senate will vote on passage of the bill.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
11:30 a.m., Thursday, March 10

House Chamber
Program for Thursday: House will meet in pro forma session at 11:30 a.m.