

This legislation also encourages the Federal Government to utilize prize authority and crowdsourcing to spur innovation and public participation in science. These creative approaches will help engage more Americans in the development of the next big thing.

I am proud that the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act also fosters the expansion of the National Science Foundation's Innovation Corps Program, also known as I-Corps. The primary goal of the NSF I-Corps is to foster entrepreneurship that will lead to the commercialization of technology that has been supported by NSF research funding.

The University of Michigan is home to one of seven I-Corps nodes in the Nation and for years has been a shining example of the strength of this program and its ability to translate research into new, innovative startup companies that are improving lives with their products and creating good-paying jobs.

Our bill will expand the I-Corps Program to other Federal agencies, greatly expanding its reach and helping to facilitate the commercialization to a much broader base of federally funded research.

Finally, I am proud of what this legislation will do to support small- and medium-sized manufacturers in Michigan, as well as across the country. The American Innovation and Competitiveness Act provides for more Federal support for regional manufacturing centers, such as Michigan's Manufacturing Technology Center, or MMTC, which has provided support to Michigan businesses since 1991. By increasing the Federal cost share for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, this bill will allow MMTC to provide training and assistance to more small- and medium-sized manufacturing businesses.

With this legislation, Congress can do its part to support and invest in the U.S. science enterprise. By enacting the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act, we can drive economic growth, increase American productivity, enhance our safety and security as a nation, and secure our competitiveness going forward. We must solidify our position as the country to beat when it comes to innovation and create more good-paying jobs here at home.

It has been an honor for me to work with my friend and colleague Senator GARDNER on this effort. I also thank Chairman THUNE and Ranking Member NELSON once again for their leadership and support throughout this process.

I look forward to the Commerce Committee considering this critical legislation next week, and I hope the full Senate takes up action soon thereafter.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF MERRICK GARLAND

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, today marks the 99th day since President Obama nominated Judge Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court—99 days. Yet Republican colleagues continue to refuse to do their constitutional duty and act on the nomination.

Just this week, we received more proof of Judge Garland's qualifications and another sign that Senate Republicans should act now. As we all know, the American Bar Association, a highly respected nonpartisan and nonideological group made up of qualified experts in the legal field, announced that it unanimously gave Judge Garland its highest rating of "well qualified," and we know they have tough standards. After poring through the available records and speaking to colleagues and peers who know Judge Garland best, here are some of the examples of what they said about him in the ABA report: "Garland's integrity is off the scales." He is a "straight shooter" who is "brilliant, exceptional, and phenomenal."

"Garland is the best that there is. He is the finest judge I have ever met. There is no one who is his peer."

"He is very sharp and works hard to find consensus among the panel. He decides the case but does not decide more than is necessary to resolve the case."

"He always is the best prepared because he wants to get it right."

I would say that is pretty good. I would say all those quotes are amazing. In interviews with hundreds of individuals in the legal profession and community who knew Judge Garland, not one person uttered a negative word about him. I wish we could have that. Not one person uttered a negative word about him.

The Senate has a constitutional duty, as we all know, to provide advice and consent on Judge Garland's nomination. Yet Senate Republicans have doubled down on the obstructionism and said we should not do anything before January 20, 2017, when the next President is sworn in. This is completely irresponsible. We have a Court right now that today came to a tied decision because they didn't have a full complement on the Court on a very important issue that could have been resolved.

Just a week ago, Judge Garland gave the graduation speech at J.O. Wilson Elementary School in Northeast Washington, the school where he tutored students for the past 18 years. He told students in the graduation speech: "Dreams don't come true by magic. . . . Go ahead and dream, and go ahead and work hard to make those dreams come true."

Judge Garland has worked hard for over 19 years, and we have seen his dedication to public service throughout his life and his career.

People in Michigan and all across the country work hard and do their jobs every day to put food on the table, support their families, and build a brighter future for their children. They know they couldn't refuse to do a really important part of their job for 99 days in a row and get away with it.

Tonight Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle will play in the annual Congressional Baseball Game. I hope it will not rain. Baseball, a game that runs for nine innings, requires nine players on the field at a time for a complete team. I hope my Republican colleagues who are playing in the game realize that "we need nine" is applicable both on the field and on the Court.

I call on Republican colleagues to do their job and hold hearings and a vote for Judge Merrick Garland. You have the choice of voting yes or voting no, but we have the responsibility to have the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

CONGRATULATING COLUMBUS, OHIO, ON WINNING THE SMART CITY CHALLENGE

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleague from the other side of the aisle, Senator BROWN, who came to the floor earlier to congratulate Mayor Andy Ginther of Columbus, OH, and the people of Columbus, OH, and Central Ohio for a big victory this week. We won the Federal Department of Transportation's Smart City grant competition. This is something we have been working on for months. It is a big deal to us in Central Ohio. It gives us the opportunity to get \$40 million in terms of a grant from the Department of Transportation to be a model city and also in combination with another grant of \$10 million from Vulcan Corporation and \$90 million that has been raised in the private sector—that is a total of about \$140 million to reshape transportation in Central Ohio to create more economic growth for the citizens of Central Ohio and to be a model not just for Ohio but for the rest of the country on how we can use smart transportation to help create economic growth and opportunity.

I want to thank U.S. Secretary of Transportation Foxx for getting this decision exactly right. As I have said to Secretary Foxx about this competition over the past several months, I believe this is the right investment for our tax dollars. I believe Columbus is the right city. I believe we have done all the right things to be the proper recipient for this. I was honored to help set up meetings between Secretary Foxx and Mayor Andy Ginther. Secretary Foxx was always a thoughtful and respectful listener, and ultimately he made the right decision.

It was a tough competition. We had 77 other cities submit applications, and among the finalists were some very impressive cities, very innovative cities—