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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COMER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

June 13, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JAMES COMER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

AMERICAN SOLDIERS KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, sadly, I come to the floor to remind the Members of the House, as well as the American people, that three Americans were killed last week in Afghanistan: Corporal Dillon Baldrige, Sergeant William Bays, Sergeant Eric Houck. They were killed by the Afghans they were training.

Afghanistan is the biggest waste of life and money I have ever seen in my life. I have beside me two little girls who, at the time, lived in my district: Eden Baldrige and Stephanie Baldrige. Their daddy, Kevin, was sent from Camp Lejeune, which is in my district, along with Colonel Benjamin Palmer, who serves at Cherry Point, which is also in my district. They were sent to Afghanistan 3 years ago to train Afghanistsans how to be policemen.

Well, the tragedy of this story is that Corporal Baldrige emailed his wife, Amy, and said: "Amy, I don't trust them. I don't trust any of them." And the very next day, he was shot, along with Colonel Palmer, and killed.

Yet we in the Congress have never had a debate since 2001 on the future of America's involvement in Afghanistan. That is why JOHN GARAMENDI and some on my side and his side—he is a Democrat—have put in a bill, H.R. 1668. All we are asking is that we have a debate. You can be for the bill that Mr. GARAMENDI and I have put in or you can be against it, but give us a chance to have a debate.

In 16 years, we have spent over \$850 billion, over 2,000 Americans have been killed and 20,000 severely wounded, yet it seems like the leadership in Congress does not understand that we have a constitutional responsibility, and that responsibility is to debate, especially when we are asking our young men and women to go overseas and give their life for this country.

Yet again, we have not had a debate since 2001. There are 300 members of Congress sitting on the floor today from both parties who were not here in 2001 and who have never been part of a debate on Afghanistan. I don't know what else we can do. We have written the Speaker of the House individually, myself included, and as a group, Republican and Democrat, asking the Speaker to permit a new AUMF to get to the

floor of the House to have that kind of debate on Afghanistan.

Again, it is almost like it doesn't exist, but it does exist when we bring bills to the floor to continue to spend billions of dollars over there. And John Sopko, the inspector general for Afghan reconstruction, has testified that waste, fraud, and abuse is worse in Afghanistan today than it was 16 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to say to the families of the three servicemen who I read their names—I will one more time—Corporal Dillon Baldrige, Sergeant William Bays, Sergeant Erick Houck: God be with you. We in the House of Representatives, both parties, send to you our sincere condolences.

I thank the good Lord that they were willing to give their life for this country. It is just a matter of why in the world do we continue to be in a country known as the empire of graveyards, since so many countries have been there and failed? And that is all we are doing, is failing, too, by wasting life and money.

THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HAS OVERSIGHT OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIÉRREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, the saga continues, and there seems to be no end in sight for the Trump administration's growing legal and ethical problems. Every day another shoe drops, or at least another foot is inserted into the administration's mouth.

The testimony of James Comey before the Senate Intelligence Committee last week showed us that this is no longer just a matter of foreign intelligence and the Russian meddling in American elections. While that is very important and we need to address the

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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foreign intelligence and security aspects of that matter, the very important question of how we keep Russia from hacking our elections in the future, what is clear is that the investigations into the Trump administration are now matters for the Judiciary Committee.

The gentlewoman from California, Senator FEINSTEIN, and I were on CNN this weekend, and we made the point that the Judiciary Committee has the oversight responsibility for the Justice Department, therefore, it is time for the committee to do its job.

That was the theme of my speech here last week, and nothing has happened. It is also the reason I wrote to Judiciary Chairman BOB GOODLATTE last week to request that he take action, hold hearings, begin preparations for the hearings that will come—and they will come—because the silence of the Judiciary Committee has been deafening so far.

As soon as President Trump said on Friday he was willing to testify under oath 100 percent, I wrote Judiciary Chairman GOODLATTE to say the committee should schedule a hearing and take the President at his word.

Now, I don't think the chairman will invite the President, a man he campaigned for, because the role of the House Judiciary Committee right now is to protect the President at all costs, shielding the President from tough questions instead of representing the people's interest.

In doing so, Judiciary Republicans and House Republicans in general are getting deeper and deeper into bed with this President. You see, they have a whole agenda, and they are counting on this President to help them cut taxes for people with trust funds while cutting healthcare, education, child care, civil rights and voting rights for people who work for a living.

Mr. Speaker, the House Judiciary Committee ought to be in the middle of congressional examinations of the Trump administration, and so far they have been on the sidelines.

Is it no longer the practice of the House of Representatives to hold oversight hearings? Is it no longer the practice of this body to hold the executive branch and the White House accountable?

I have never seen an administration more in need of congressional oversight than this one, yet the Congress does not dare do anything that might cause the President to call someone out in one of his dawn Twitter rants.

We know that the administration has a policy now—this administration—not cooperating with congressional oversight, instructing agencies not to comply with inquiries from members of Congress unless they are a committee chairman, all of whom happen to be Republican.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but the President and his administration are accountable to over 320 million Americans, all 435 Members of this body and

100 Senators as well, regardless of their party affiliation.

At least one senior senator called this policy opposing congressional oversight nonsense. To his credit, the Republican chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the Senate, Mr. GRASSLEY of Iowa, is not impacted by the Trump administration policy because he is a chairman, but he spoke out forcefully against the Presidential obstruction. See, my friends, that is how you do it, the way Mr. GRASSLEY did it. Follow his example.

And then there is our old friend, the former Speaker and an adviser to the President, Mr. Gingrich, who is now advising the President to terminate Mr. Mueller, the former FBI Director investigating the President and his subordinates, including the family members of the President. Mr. Gingrich said Mueller was a superb choice with an impeccable reputation for fairness just a couple of weeks ago, but now he says there is no way Mueller can be fair. He wants the President to fire Mueller and he wants a political fight against the very idea of special prosecutors.

Now, Mr. Gingrich has been joined in this chorus by a Trump confidante and golf buddy, the president of Newsmax, who says the President is contemplating firing Mueller.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to see the President on a fast track to impeachment, then he should take this advice and fire Mueller. If you want to see this President in the express lane to impeachment, no ifs, ands, or buts, then go for it. We dare you.

Even the Judiciary Committee, which has shown no interest in doing anything other than rubber stamping this administration's agenda, would be forced to take action.

VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment and recognize an important piece of legislation that is scheduled for a vote on the House floor today, the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act.

This bipartisan legislation will reform the VA by allowing the Secretary to fire underperforming employees, ensure appropriate protections for whistleblowers, and authorize the Secretary to directly appoint folks to critically important positions that need filled quickly. This legislation has already passed the Senate, and I look forward to its passage in the House, and to send it to the President for his signature this week.

Those that serve our Nation are honored heroes. Unfortunately, the VA bureaucracy hasn't always provided the care, respect, and honor they deserve. I look forward to this vote and to bring-

ing our valued veterans one step closer to the care they deserve.

KINSLEY, KANSAS, SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, last weekend I was honored to join the Kinsley, Kansas, Summer Food Service Program at the Kinsley-Offerle Junior-Senior High School. It always makes my day when I walk into a room filled with children I delivered in the past decade and their moms.

Like those programs in communities in my district and around the country, these folks serve free breakfast and lunch, and the program is sponsored by the school district. It is great to see this local partnership, this community coalition coming together to help their children.

We live in the most prosperous country in the world, where we have annually produced a tremendous abundance of food, yet it continues to amaze me that we have the level of hunger that we do, especially among our own children.

Good nutrition is too important for the development of these young minds not to ensure, through the communities and programs like these, that they are well fed. Whether you are in the largest ag-producing district in the country, like mine in Kansas, or a city on the coast, we have no excuses.

I thank programs like these for their role in raising a healthy generation.

NATIONAL TEACHERS HALL OF FAME

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, in the last 2½ centuries, 119 of our Nation's educators have tragically lost their lives while serving both their students and their communities, a terrible sacrifice they didn't expect when they followed their calling to help our young people.

The National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia State University, in my district, built a memorial honoring those who have lost their lives while pursuing their educational calling. Founded in 2014, the memorial was built to honor those who had taught students, ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade, and has now been expanded to honor fallen educators at all academic levels.

While the National Teachers Hall of Fame is regionally recognized, our country still lacks a national memorial for those that have lost their lives while serving our students. By recognizing this memorial, we don't have to spend a dime of Federal funding, but we have a place to remember these men and women.

I have introduced a bill, H.R. 2711, that will do just that. I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

COVFEFE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, the President tweeted the

word “covfefe.” We still don’t know what it means, why the President tweeted it, or if it was simply an innocent typo, something we are all guilty of making. But what is more important than the creation of a random, now infamous, word in a tweet is that the President deleted the post less than 12 hours later. This is just 1 of 18 tweets the President has deleted since his inauguration, and, each time, the question is raised whether or not he can legally do that, because when the President deletes a tweet, it is equivalent to him destroying a record.

That is why I have introduced the COVFEFE Act, Communications Over Various Feeds Electronically for Engagement. It is a silly name, but a serious issue. By expanding the Presidential Records Act to include social media, it would ensure that all tweets posted by the President from his personal account are archived and preserved and would finally answer the question on whether or not the President can delete tweets.

Although the bill’s name is a little tongue-in-cheek, the focus of the legislation is more important now than ever. If the President is going to take to social media to make sudden public policy proclamations, we must ensure that these statements are documented and preserved for future reference. As Sean Spicer has said, each @realDonaldTrump tweet should be taken as an official White House statement.

□ 1015

Tweets are powerful, and the President must be held accountable for every post, from commenting on NATO, to the Paris Agreement, to his Muslim travel ban, and his response to the devastating terror attack in London. And on Monday, we learned that the appellate court cited the President’s tweet in ruling against the travel ban.

The President’s frequent unfiltered use of his personal Twitter account as a means of official communication is unprecedented, and we must respond accordingly. Sometimes it takes a creative acronym to drive attention to a much larger issue.

This is the second bill I have introduced this Congress to address the lack of transparency in the administration. Back in March, I introduced the aptly named “Mar-a-Lago Act” to require the White House visitor logs, or visitor logs from any other location where the President conducts official business, to be made public to the American people.

Unlike the Obama administration, the current administration stated they are unwilling to do so. For these reasons, it is critical that we push commonsense policy that promotes government accountability and transparency, because in order to maintain public trust in government, elected officials must answer for what they do and say. That includes 140-character tweets and records of who has the President’s ear

at the White House, Trump Tower, or his southern Florida home. If regaining the public’s trust is the first step, then taking action to maintain that trust for the long term is the next.

Standalone transparency legislation is absolutely necessary, but it is not enough. We must stop treating transparency and accountability as peripheral issues and proactively incorporate them into everything we do.

Going forward, I will continue to promote efforts to increase public access to the Federal Government and ensure that all elected officials are being held accountable for their words and their actions.

THE PARIS CLIMATE ACCORD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. McCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, President Trump’s most important mandate is to revive America’s struggling economy. This simply cannot be done under the terms of the Paris climate accord.

According to The Heritage Foundation, adhering to that agreement would have destroyed 400,000 American jobs and forfeit \$2.5 trillion in lost productivity by 2035. That is about \$20,000 in lower annual earnings for a family of four.

There is a reason we suffered the slowest economic growth of the post-war era under Barack Obama: bad deals and bad policies like this.

President Obama bound America to the Paris accord by executive fiat. He committed billions of dollars of taxes paid by American families to an international slush fund for developing countries, and then he set his agencies loose to suppress American industry, regardless of the costs imposed on working Americans.

And for what exactly? The EPA’s own modeling predicts that if the accord were fully implemented by 2030, it would reduce global temperature increases by 17/100ths of 1 degree by 2100.

Its advocates have recently dismissed this inconvenient truth by explaining: Well, it would at least send a powerful signal.

Well, we can already see the cost to average families of sending this powerful signal. European energy prices are more than twice as high as the United States, and their economies lag far behind even the anemic growth under Obama.

California has adopted many of these policies and now bears one of the highest energy costs in the country, along with the highest poverty rate. Without the high-tech wealth of the bay area, California’s economy would trail well behind the national growth rate.

Paris apologists promise a new era of green energy jobs. Well, as long as consumers are coerced into buying overpriced green products and struggling families are forced to fork over billions

of dollars through higher utility bills and taxes, well, of course, politically connected green energy companies will do very well, but at enormous expense to the overall economy.

Those 374,000 solar jobs we hear about generate just 1 percent of our electricity. The 187,000 coal, oil, and gas jobs remaining in this country generate 65 percent of our electricity.

The wide historical fluctuations in both carbon dioxide and global temperature suggest that natural influences vastly outweigh human causes. Paleoclimatologists tell us that atmospheric CO₂ levels were five times higher during the Jurassic Period, and global temperatures were 13 degrees higher during the Pleistocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum. That is long before humans or SUVs.

In 2016, President Obama came to Yosemite Valley to warn that the last of Yosemite’s surrounding glaciers would soon disappear. Ironically, if he stood on the same spot 20,000 years earlier, he would have been buried under about 2,000 feet of glacial ice.

The first IPCC report in 1990, sounding the alarm over global warming, gives us some practical experience with its climate modeling. Actual global temperatures are now well below the lowest of the forecasts that the IPCC made 27 years ago. And 20 years before that, the scientific consensus warned that pollution was about to trigger another Ice Age.

The fact is the current state of science is a long way from understanding the intricate natural forces and interrelationships in global climatology, let alone being able to accurately predict temperature changes over hundreds of years within fractions of a degree. That is perhaps why many prominent and respected climatologists continue to challenge and debate the question, despite claims that 97 percent of the scientists agree and despite calls to silence them as heretics.

As the fable of “The Emperor’s New Clothes” illustrates, nothing is more menacing to a flawed consensus than a single dissenter. Thanks to our politically incorrect President, the United States has just stepped forward from the crowd and pointed out the obvious.

The Paris accord points the way to a future of skyrocketing energy prices, lower productivity and wages, a massive wealth transfer from America to nations like China and India, and a permanently declining quality of life for our children.

Fortunately, President Trump has a different vision, a future in which families can enjoy the prosperity that abundant energy provides and the quality of life that comes from that prosperity. We can’t get there from Paris.

But whichever course we take, one thing is certain, the Earth will continue to warm and cool as it has for billions of years.

FREE NABEEL RAJAB

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call for the immediate and unconditional release of Nabeel Rajab, the prominent Bahraini human rights defender who remains in custody in Bahrain after being arrested a year ago. He is currently being detained in a hospital.

Nabeel is a leading human rights activist known across the region and beyond for this peaceful views. His work is internationally recognized, and he has won several major human rights awards.

Nabeel has been unjustly imprisoned several times since 2011, when he participated in protests against the Government of Bahrain and joined calls for democratic reform.

In April 2015, he was arrested following tweets criticizing the Saudi-led coalition airstrikes in Yemen and the treatment of detainees in Bahrain's Juw Prison. He was released after 3 months, but prosecutors ordered his rearrest in June of 2016. He is being held on numerous charges and is on trial in two separate cases for his human rights work. If convicted on all charges, he would face up to 18 years in jail.

So what kinds of charges are we talking about? He is accused of insulting national institutions, spreading tendentious rumors, and offending a foreign country. In other words, he is accused of exercising his right to freedom of speech.

Last December, a court ordered Nabeel's release on bail, but he was immediately rearrested for making "false or malicious" statements in TV interviews where he criticized Bahrain's refusal to allow journalists and human rights groups access to their country.

I have experienced that, by the way. In August of 2014, I was denied permission to visit Bahrain with Brian Dooley, who works with Human Rights First.

Since his arrest last year, Nabeel has undergone two operations, suffered heart palpitations, required emergency medical care, and developed other medical conditions. After the first operation, he was returned to prison with an open wound and had to be rushed back to the hospital 3 days later to treat the resulting infection.

His trials have been postponed more than a dozen times since his arrest last year, most recently yesterday. Nabeel has spent most of the last 10 months in solitary confinement after The New York Times published an op-ed by him last September. In that piece, Nabeel urged the Obama administration to use its leverage to resolve the conflict in Yemen instead of fanning the flames by supplying arms to the Saudi coalition.

A second New York Times piece by Nabeel appeared just last month on May 17, where he urged the Trump ad-

ministration to review its relations with authoritarian regimes like Bahrain.

I include in the RECORD these two articles so this House can see for itself the kinds of opinions that the Bahraini Government considers so dangerous.

[From the New York Times, Sept. 4, 2016]

LETTER FROM A BAHRAINI JAIL

(By Nabeel Rajab)

RIFFA, BAHRAIN.—I write this from a Bahraini jail cell where I have been detained, largely in isolation, since the beginning of summer. This is not new to me: I have been here before, from 2012 to 2014, in 2015, and now again, all because of my work as a human rights defender.

Nor am I alone: There are some 4,000 political prisoners in Bahrain, which has the highest prison population per capita in the Middle East. This is a country that has subjected its people to imprisonment, torture and even death for daring to desire democracy. My close colleague Abdulhadi al-Khawaja was tortured and sentenced to life in prison in 2011 for his human rights work.

No one has been properly held to account for systematic abuses that have affected thousands. In 2015, I was arrested on new charges of "insulting a statutory body" and "spreading rumors during a time of war" for posts on Twitter. The police held me from April to July last year. I was released only after the king of Bahrain issued a pardon in an earlier case, also related to views I had expressed.

Despite the pardon, the 2015 charges and a travel ban remained in place, and I was threatened with further action. The head of the cybercrimes unit at the Criminal Investigation Directorate in Bahrain summoned me and my family to a meeting, where—in front of my children—he warned me that if I didn't stop my advocacy work, I would face up to 15 years in prison.

That threat became reality when I was arrested in June. The warrant came from the same cybercrimes unit chief who threatened me last year, and I now face prosecution for my work exposing human rights abuses. The authorities even added a third charge of "insulting a neighboring country," meaning Saudi Arabia. They have also laid a new charge against me of spreading "false news," in relation to interviews I've given to the news media. It's quite the rap sheet.

My supposed "insult" to Saudi Arabia relates to tweets I posted calling for an end to the war in Yemen, a war escalated by the Saudi-led coalition to which Bahrain belongs and for which the United States provides support. The United States has authorized multibillion-dollar arms sales to the Saudis since the war began last year.

From the beginning, I was against the war. The civilian death toll was immediate and catastrophic, and I spoke out against the unfolding humanitarian crisis, calling for peace. Now, I am paying the price.

I met Secretary of State John Kerry on his visit to Bahrain earlier this year and was glad to talk with him about our difficult situation. Mr. Kerry criticized the boycott of the 2014 election by opposition parties, although the opposition's demand was simply for a constitutional monarchy in place of Bahrain's autocratic system. Since that election, the leader of the largest opposition group, the Wafaq National Islamic Society, was sentenced to nine years for "promoting violence," and the society was suspended and its assets frozen.

I would like to ask Mr. Kerry now: Is this the kind of ally America wants? The kind that punishes its people for thinking, that prevents its citizens from exercising their basic rights?

The government has gone after me not only for my comments on Yemen, but also for my domestic activism. One of my charges, "insulting a statutory body," concerns my work shedding light on the torture of hundreds of prisoners in Jaw Prison in March 2015. The State Department has highlighted the same problem, but last year lifted the arms embargo it had placed on Bahrain since the repressions that followed the 2011 Arab Spring protests, citing "meaningful progress on human rights reforms." Really?

After I met Mr. Kerry, I was interrogated at the Interior Ministry by the chief of the cybercrimes unit, the one who later ordered my arrest. He wanted to know everything about my conversation with the secretary of state. That official interrogated me again in April after I signed an open letter, with 25 other activists, calling on President Obama to discuss human rights and the plight of activists in the Middle East when he visited Saudi Arabia earlier this year.

The Bahraini government tried to pressure me into publicly disavowing the letter. I refused.

Recent American statements on Bahrain's human rights problems have been strong, and that is good. But unless the United States is willing to use its leverage, fine words have little effect. America's actions, on the other hand, have emboldened the government to detain me and other rights advocates: Its unconditional support for Saudi Arabia and its lifting of the arms ban on Bahrain have direct consequences for the activists struggling for dignity in these countries.

Instead of fanning the flames in Yemen by supplying arms to the Saudi coalition, Mr. Obama's administration should use its leverage to resolve the conflict. Working to secure the release of people who call for peace, and are trying to build democracy in the region, would serve that aim.

Update: After this Op-Ed essay was published, Nabeel Rajab was charged with publishing "false news and statements and malicious rumors that undermine the prestige of the kingdom."

Nabeel Rajab is the president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and an advisory committee member for Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa Division.

[From the New York Times, May 17, 2017]

DON'T PROFIT FROM ABUSES BY BAHRAIN

(By Nabeel Rajab)

Yemen has entered its third year of war, and war crimes are being committed at an escalating rate. For Yemen's children, facing a man-made famine, this conflict between Houthi rebels and a coalition led by Saudi Arabia has begun a new phase of horrors.

Despite that, President Trump is planning to make Saudi Arabia the destination of his first state visit this week. Meanwhile, his administration already decided to lift all human rights restrictions on arms sales to my country, Bahrain, which is a partner in the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen. This reckless pursuit of profit without any strings attached—including a lucrative deal for 19 F-16 fighter jets worth \$2.8 billion—will aid and abet the destruction of Yemen, intensifying the country's humanitarian disaster.

It fills me with shame that my country, Bahrain, is bombing Yemen, with United States support. And while the Saudi-led coalition continues its air assault on Yemen, Bahrain is also trying to crush civil society back home. This other, domestic campaign is aimed at people who, like me, cannot abide injustice and are willing to speak out.

Even so, we look to our friends in United States for strength and a united vision for a better future. Americans expect to have a government that is accountable, and that respects and protects its people's rights. That is our great ambition, also, in the Gulf.

We know we risk much in calling for this. Some of my fellow activists have been tortured, sentenced to life imprisonment, even killed. But I believe that respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms is the way to attain peace, stability and prosperity in any nation; I have devoted my life to that ideal.

Criticizing war crimes and torture on Twitter, speaking to journalists about our dire situation in Bahrain and the Gulf, and writing this newspaper: For these actions, I now face a total of 18 years' imprisonment. I've already spent more than 10 months in jail, mostly in solitary confinement. One of the charges against me derives from my taking a stand against the war in Yemen—not only because it causes misery and tragic loss of life, but also because it fosters violence and terrorism across the region.

Does the Trump administration know that former Bahraini soldiers have left the country to join the Islamic State? Does Washington know that Bahrain allows no Shiite citizens in its military even though Shiites are a majority of the population? Does the White House know that the Bahraini Army is a sectarian force that publishes books endorsing the murder of Shiites who do not "repent"?

When I criticized the fostering of extremism in the Bahraini Army, I was tossed into prison for six months. Bahrain's king, Hamad bin Isaal-Khalifa, has just approved a constitutional amendment allowing military courts to try civilians on unspecified charges of "terrorism." It is a law so vague and sweeping that my act of criticism could now result in a military prosecution.

This same Bahraini military, newly empowered, will soon be awarded its new American-made jets to fly over Yemen.

Bahraini citizens recognize that the United States is a superpower, but that status should not depend solely on its military capacity. American power should also be built on respect for justice, equality and human rights—the core principles upon which the United States was founded. It is these values that should dictate American foreign policy, not the profit margin of Lockheed Martin, maker of those F-16s destined for Bahrain.

The Trump administration must review its relations with authoritarian regimes like Bahrain's. These problematic alliances cost the United States far more in the long term than any gain it makes from arms deals. Human rights and justice should be a consistent priority in American foreign policy, not applied in one case, ignored in another.

All our destinies are tied together. What will happen to Bahrain if everyone who supports peace, democracy and the rule of law is in jail? To whom will Bahrain's disenfranchised youth turn to for support and guidance? These are the questions the Trump administration must ask itself before it sends my jailers another batch of fighter jets.

I am realistic about what to expect. After all, President Trump recently played host in Washington to Saudi Arabia's deputy crown prince and Egypt's president for life without bringing up human rights. But I have faith in the American people and civil society, as well as the lawmakers who continue to challenge these shortsighted, morally unsound policies.

Meanwhile, my trial date kept being moved. First, it was set for April 16. But this was the day of Bahrain's Formula One Grand Prix, the biggest sports event in the country,

so that was embarrassing for the government. Then, my trial was rescheduled for May 3. But that happened to be World Press Freedom Day, so the authorities pushed the date back again, to this week.

My detention has entered its 11th month. My health has declined. I'm recovering from a painful surgical procedure, yet the authorities have made every part of my detention as difficult as possible. My lawyers have been obstructed from providing me the best possible defense. But what I have endured is a small fraction of what the people of Yemen have suffered, largely because of the military intervention of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and their allies.

For my part, I will not stand idly by. I urge Americans not to do so, either. They must all call for an end to the Trump administration's unconditional support for my country's misdeeds at home and abroad.

Nabeel Rajab is the president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and an advisory committee member for Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa Division.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Under Obama, the State Department repeatedly called on Bahrain to release Nabeel and drop the charges against him. It also tied the sale of F-16s to Bahrain to improvements in human rights.

In contrast, the new administration has lifted the hold on the F-16 sales and failed to call for Nabeel's release. When President Trump met with the King of Bahrain on May 21, he told him: We are going to have a very, very long-term relationship. I look forward to it very much—many of the same things common.

It was Trump's quote.

I am not sure what the President had in mind, but let's review what has happened in Bahrain this year. On January 5, the government restored arrest and investigation powers to its national security agency notorious for torturing detainees in 2011. This reverses one of the few security sector reforms outlined in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry that the government carried out.

On January 15, Bahrain carried out its first execution since 2010, killing three men who were allegedly tortured into making false confessions.

On February 21, Bahrain's constitution was amended to allow military courts to try civilians.

On May 31, the government dissolved the secular opposition political party Wa'ad, and it was the last major opposition party still operating in the country after the al-Wefaq party was dissolved last summer.

On June 4, the government ordered al-Wasat, the country's only independent newspaper, to be suspended indefinitely.

Mr. Speaker, Bahrain is headed down an increasingly authoritarian path. It is closing off all avenues for peaceful dissent.

But the President of the United States does not get it. Could that have to do with the income he earned when the Bahraini Government held its National Day celebration at Trump International Hotel last December?

What I know is that appearances matter, and Bahrain is an increasingly

volatile dangerous place for our military personnel. We should not enable the Bahraini Government's repression. I call for the immediate and unconditional release of Nabeel Rajab and others jailed for their peaceful political views, and I urge the Trump administration to join me. I thank my colleagues for listening.

APPLAUDING THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS COALITION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, last week, I met with members of the National Young Farmers Coalition. This nonprofit was founded just 8 years ago by three farmers in upstate New York. They gathered around a farmhouse table to talk about the challenges facing them and their peers: difficulty securing loans, access to affordable farmland, and student loan debt.

They decided that they and other young farmers needed to step up and fight for the future of farming as a united front. Across the country, other young farmers were also coming to the same realization, and the coalition was born.

It works in conjunction with farmers, consumers, organizations, and government to tackle the many challenges that young, independent, and sustainable farmers face in their first years of operating a farm business.

Young farmers include all people who are kicking off a career in agriculture. Typically, in their first 10 years of growing, this includes anyone from a first-year farm apprentice to someone pursuing a midlife career change to agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, rural America is struggling. But rural areas offer unique contributions to our Nation, often in the form of agriculture, raw materials, and naturally occurring commodities.

As more and more young people pursue fast-paced careers in cities and urban centers, the size and composition of populations in rural America is rapidly changing. American agriculture, in particular, is facing a crisis of attrition.

Two-thirds of our farmland is on the cusp of transition as farmers grow older and retire, and there are fewer young farmers positioned to manage this resource.

□ 1030

Farmers over the age of 65 outnumber farmers under the age of 35 by a margin of 6 to 1. The number of farmers under the age of 35 grew by only 1 percent from 2007 to 2012. In order to fix this problem, we must help incentivize more young people to pursue careers in agriculture.

That is why, together with Representatives JOE COURTNEY of Connecticut and JOHN FASO of New York, I

introduced the Young Farmers Success Act, which aims to accomplish this by adding farmers to the existing Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.

After making 10 years of income-based student loan payments, a young farmer would see the balance of his or her student loans forgiven, just as other public servants who utilize this program currently do. It is my hope that the enactment of this legislation will lead to the continued enhancement of our Nation's farms.

Agriculture is the number one industry in Pennsylvania, Mr. Speaker, and as such, many of the rural communities in the State depend on agriculture in some form. Unfortunately, USDA released its first farm income forecast for 2017 and predicted that net farm income is expected to decline for the fourth consecutive year.

Declining farm income coupled with low commodity prices over the past few years have adversely impacted farmers and rural communities across the Nation. I have met with farmers in and outside my district who are facing tough decisions about the future of their farms.

As vice chair of the Agriculture Committee and chairman of the Nutrition Subcommittee, I know our Nation needs a robust agriculture sector so that we can continue to provide our Nation and nations across the world with nutritious food and fiber. In order to do so, we need to find ways to cultivate the next generation of farmers. Now, I believe that the Young Farmers Success Act does just that by taking away one of the barriers that can deter young and beginner farmers from entering into agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, our farmers feed this Nation. Farmers are stewards of the land and cornerstones of our rural communities. They provide the country with a safe and affordable food supply. But we need to do more to cultivate the future generation of farmers. They face tough odds by the very nature of the business, and this legislation will provide incentives for those who would like to pursue a future in the agriculture industry, which aids our national security and the long-term sustainability of our country.

Investing in our Nation's ability to put food on the table for our neighbors is not a partisan issue. I encourage every Member of this House to cosponsor this important legislation.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ST. CLOUD AREA ADAPTED SOFTBALL TEAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. EMMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the St. Cloud Area adapted softball team for winning the State championship earlier this month.

Coach Mike Bakken led the team to victory with the help of Tyrell Franck-

Ross, Dayton Wienjes, and Jordan Williams, who all played exceptionally well. While the individual accomplishments were important, it was a team effort, with all 16 players giving it their all and leaving everything they had on the field.

The tournament was intense, with St. Cloud coming from behind to win the first game. St. Cloud scored five runs in the top of the seventh to beat Chaska 17-14.

We are proud of all the players from around the State for their effort in the tournament, and we are especially proud of our St. Cloud Area team for their success and their hard work over this past season.

YOUNG LEADERS IN STEM

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two high school students from my district for being chosen to represent the great State of Minnesota in two prestigious science, technology, engineering, and math, more commonly called STEM-based, programs.

Alex Nutt, of Princeton High School, has been selected to participate in the Congress of Future Medical Leaders; and Michael Dehmer, of Buffalo High School, has been selected to participate in the Congress of Future Science and Technology Leaders.

These programs were specifically designed to inspire high school students who are at the top of their class and hope to pursue a science-based career. Once they have successfully completed their congress, Alex and Michael will continue to receive mentoring to help them successfully pursue their chosen careers.

The career paths that Alex Nutt and Michael Dehmer have chosen to pursue are not easy, but they are incredibly important to our country. In order for our Nation to remain both competitive and successful, it is vital that today's students take an active interest in STEM fields. That is why I am proud to honor both Alex and Michael and to thank the National Academy of Future Physicians and Medical Scientists and the National Academy of Future Scientists and Technologists for working to ensure that the future of our Nation is bright.

MINNESOTA'S FUTURE

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate all the recent high school graduates in Minnesota's Sixth Congressional District on completing a major milestone in their young lives.

This milestone represents the beginning of the rest of your lives. And while we celebrate your achievement, we are also excited for your future, and there is so much to be excited about.

Many of you will go on to further your careers in education, travel and see the world. Some of you might go to medical school, and one of you might actually cure a disease. Some of you might run for public office, and one of you might even become the President of the United States.

You will be active in your communities. You will build families and be incredible assets to the great State of Minnesota. Your possibilities are limitless, and I hope you will always think big and never give up on your dreams.

We wish you the best of luck as you take the next step in your journey, and we look forward to watching you succeed and thrive.

I also want to thank your parents and the teachers of these wonderful scholars for guiding them along and helping them achieve this great goal. An education is the key that opens all of life's doors, and we thank you for handing these students the key.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF MARK J. SIZER

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and thank Stearns County Human Services Administrator Mark Sizer for his dedicated service to our community. After 40 years of public service and 23 years dedicated to Stearns County, Mark is heading into retirement.

Since he was appointed to the human services administrator position in 2011, Mark has dedicated himself to the many programs and employees in his department and to the cities of Stearns County. Under Mark's leadership, Stearns County has offered some of the best services and programs in Minnesota.

Stearns County is one of the largest and most densely populated counties in Minnesota's Sixth Congressional District, and we are fortunate to have had such a dedicated public servant and strong leadership at the helm of this incredibly important department.

Thank you for your service, Mark. I wish you a happy and relaxing retirement with those you love. You certainly deserve it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE OF EDWARD PLATH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, the motto of the United States Coast Guard is *Semper Paratus*—"Always Ready"—and throughout its history, the members of our Coast Guard have stood ready to protect our homeland from all threats. I rise today to recognize the important work of our Coast Guard as well as its members throughout history, including those like Edward Plath.

Edward, like so many Americans of his day, answered the call to service at the onset of World War II. Despite being turned down by the Army over medical concerns, he soon joined the Coast Guard and served honorably in New Jersey, protecting the region's coastline and its vital ports from the ever-present danger of Nazi attack.

But for Edward, the Coast Guard during the war meant more than just duty

to country. It was on a blind date with a fellow sailor that he met the woman he said he would marry. A year later, they married, and for over six decades Edward and his wife lived as a loving couple and raised three daughters, including my constituent, Elizabeth Donaldson.

Mr. Plath passed away in 2010, just a couple months after his wife. But on May 17 of this year, he was buried at sea with full military honors off the coast where he served in New Jersey.

I am grateful for Mr. Plath's service to our Nation, and I am proud our team in Bucks County could assist his daughter in honoring his final wish.

Mr. Speaker, we owe a debt of gratitude to Edward Plath and to all those who serve and continue to serve, and we must always be ready to support them in any way we can, consistent with the motto of the U.S. Coast Guard.

DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR IN THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important when we have an opportunity to discuss issues in a more deliberative manner to rise to the floor to remind Americans, who every day get up and work and provide the engine to this economy, of the destructive behavior that is about to begin in the United States Congress.

The Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare, took 3 years-plus to engage with every health professional, Americans across the Nation, tens upon tens upon tens of hearings, and individual engagement with people who were sick and families who had lost loved ones because of lack of insurance.

I remember hearing from parents whose children had died because they had no insurance, one mother of a young professional lawyer who had, unfortunately, steered toward drugs but had gotten himself rehabilitated but had developed hepatitis. Because he had no insurance, he wound up dying in the emergency room. There were endless stories like that.

But the Affordable Care Act came in and provided dollars for preexisting conditions. It set a table of essentials that no health insurance could deny you the right to be covered, whether you were pregnant, whether or not you had a preexisting condition. They couldn't deny you hospital coverage.

I don't know if Americans are realizing or our colleagues know that in days past, before the Affordable Care Act, you could be sold an insurance boondoggle that, when you got to the emergency room or the hospital and had to be admitted, they would say you have no coverage. That is the life-saving aspect of the Affordable Care Act.

I don't want anyone to be disabused of the fact that, after the House passed

this heinous, terrible, dangerous, devastating bill, it would go away. The Senate now is going to pick up the same TrumpCare bill that will provide higher costs with less coverage; that will include 23 million people losing their coverage; and as well, that will gut the priorities and the protections for preexisting conditions. If you have asthma, if you are pregnant, you won't be covered. And then, of course, there is a crushing age tax where those who are 50 and older may be paying \$12,000 or more for their coverage in healthcare; and as well, it steals from Medicare and jeopardizes the Medicare trust fund.

Let it be very clear: that is the same pathway of the Senate bill, which is then going to come back to the House. The Republicans continue to undermine the very needs of the American people.

Now, let me explain why insurance companies are closing in various States like Ohio.

It is not ObamaCare. It is the Republicans refuse to come together with Democrats and fix it. It is the devastating, destructive executive order from the administration that refuses to pay subsidies. The subsidies allowed working and middle class Americans to have insurance. And the insurance industry, the health insurance industry said, it is too unstable a market—not because of Americans, not because of people who are buying insurance, but because, directly from the White House, they have undermined it by stopping the payment of subsidies between the White House and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

What kind of mercy is that? Where is the kindness and the love and the honoring of the pact we make with the American people that we will stand as their protectors? Where is the basis for how we fought so hard under President Obama and finally got what had not been secured in a century: health insurance for Americans?

Yet we also face a devastating, unstable government. The firing of Director Comey, the testimony under oath that says, by Director Comey, that he felt directed to end the Flynn investigation. I know that doesn't put food on the plates of Americans or their children, but it is the integrity of government.

Where are the investigations in this House? Where are the fact-finding investigations in this House?

The rumor that is now proliferating that a distinguished professional like Mr. Mueller, a former Director of the FBI who served Republican and Democratic Presidents, there is a rumor that the special counsel will be fired.

We are always told in our neck of the woods in Texas that where there is smoke, there is fire. Mr. President, are you going to begin Watergate all over again? The Saturday Night Massacre?

This House needs to begin its investigation now, and this is a need to begin to move on directing the Judici-

ary Committee to begin an investigation of the facts. It warrants it because we have to clear the air before we can sit down at the table and do the work that needs to be done.

In the midst of all of this, a destructive bill is being prepared in the Senate that is going to kill the healthcare of all Americans. It is time for all of us to wake up and take our government back.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

□ 1045

PASS VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Mrs. ROBY) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, today we have an opportunity to send to the President's desk legislation bringing unprecedented accountability to the VA and badly needed protections for whistleblowers who expose wrongdoing.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who has worked with whistleblowers to shed light on negligence, abuse, and even criminal activity within the Central Alabama VA, I can tell you that this reform legislation is long overdue. When it comes to the VA scandal that erupted a few years ago, most Americans probably remember Phoenix, Arizona, and the horrendous activity that happened there. Phoenix became the epitome of a nationwide VA accountability problem, and rightly so.

However, in many ways, the Central Alabama VA could also be considered a poster child for the need of reform of the Department of Veterans Affairs from top to bottom. It might not have garnered as many headlines as Phoenix, but the nature and extent of the abuse inside the Central Alabama VA was every bit as bad, if not worse.

My staff and I worked with courageous whistleblowers and dedicated journalists to pull back the curtain there. Here are just a handful of examples of what we found:

More than 900 X-ray cancer screenings, some showing malignancies, were lost and unread for years. When alerted to the problem, top administrators tried to cover it up.

A VA pulmonologist manipulated more than 1,200 patient records, but even after being caught twice, was still give an satisfactory review.

Perhaps the most disturbing is a Central Alabama VA employee took a recovering veteran to a crack house and bought him drugs and provided him prostitutes in order to extort his VA payments. And even when caught, this employee was not fired, not until 1½ years later, when we exposed it in the newspaper.

The crack incident stands out in my mind for many reasons. First, it still haunts me to my core just how callous

and uncaring a person could be to do such a thing to a veteran patient. Second, it illustrates just how complacent the bureaucracy had become to let that behavior slide. And third, it is chilling to think that we would never have even known about it if not for a brave VA employee who walked into my Montgomery office and handed us a copy of the police report.

Thankfully, under the 2014 reform law, the director of the Central Alabama VA was fired in the wake of these exposures. That law took an important step toward speeding up the termination process for top officials. But did you know that he remains the only senior official fired as a result of the VA scandal?

Mr. Speaker, we all know that law did not go far enough. For one thing, it did not extend the strict accountability standards to rank-and-file employees. Senior managers aren't the only ones responsible for the failures at the VA. There has been a culture of complacency up and down the chain of command for a very long time, and the complicated process for disciplining or removing problem employees only makes it worse.

That law also didn't go far enough to protect whistleblowers. There is no question in my mind that without the courage of those who came forward to tell the truth, very little would have changed at the Central Alabama VA, if anything at all, yet those whistleblowers were the very targets of retaliation from supervisors and other officials.

Mr. Speaker, today we have the opportunity to take that next step on behalf of our veterans and those who are working to serve them. S. 1094, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, grants the VA Secretary the power to fire, demote, or suspend any VA employee no matter their rank. The bill also increases protections for whistleblowers who put themselves at risk to improve the lives and care for veterans.

Let me say that most VA employees care a great deal about veterans and work very hard to provide the best service. It is not fair for the hard-working employees of the VA that a few bad actors get to evade punishment. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. David Shulkin, has said he wants greater authority to remove bad employees as he sees fit. It is time for Congress to give him that authority and to let him know what we expect and that we expect him to use it.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to do the right thing by our veterans, to pass this legislation today and send it to the President's desk.

CANARY IN THE OBAMACARE COAL MINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, ObamaCare has created a healthcare crisis for the people in my district. Not long ago, I received this letter from one of my constituents in Knoxville: "I just read where Humana Insurance Company will not offer health insurance in any of the exchanges in 2018. This puts my wife in a predicament, as there will be no health insurance companies offering health insurance in 2018 in Knoxville at this time. We need help with this mounting issue, as I am sure there are a lot more of us in the same boat. When we first signed up for ACA insurance 3 years ago, her monthly premium was \$245. The second year it was \$660. This year it is \$963 a month. This is absolutely ridiculous for a person on a limited income."

Many thousands in Tennessee and across the Nation have very similar stories. My constituent was right. It is ridiculous. Now, even this expensive insurance will disappear, and there are a lot of people in the same boat as my constituent and his wife.

Because there has been so much publicity about how the Republicans now control both Congress and the White House, it seems a great many people do not realize that we are still totally and completely under ObamaCare. A bill was passed in the House, but a different version is being discussed in the Senate. So Republicans have not yet done anything to change ObamaCare. So if someone is still having trouble getting health insurance or is still paying too much for their insurance, it is still because of ObamaCare.

Just today, in the nonpartisan Capitol Hill newspaper, *The Hill*, is this headline, "Insurer exits bolster GOP case for ObamaCare repeal." Insurance companies are still pulling out right and left all over the country because of ObamaCare. ObamaCare is still imploding all over the country.

ObamaCare's allegedly compassionate regulations were supposed to guarantee access to healthcare for the sick. Instead, they have made access worse. Current propaganda seems to be persuading some people that ObamaCare is really protecting the people it claims to be, but Harvard and others are finding otherwise in their studies. They are finding that the ObamaCare regulations literally penalize insurers who offer quality coverage for the sick. This motivates insurers to offer only unattractive plans to people with expensive medical conditions.

The insurance company who offers the best plans ends up with the most—and the sickest—enrollees, and so the highest costs. Sadly, this is causing a race to the bottom. The ObamaCare regulations are causing everyone, including people with preexisting conditions, to have low-quality coverage or no insurance options at all.

ObamaCare's harmful government regulations have driven every insurer out of the marketplace exchange in 16 counties in the Knoxville region. For

43,000 Tennesseans—unless Blue Cross Blue Shield can come back into the area, which they are considering—there will be no exchange plans available after December.

But it is not just in Knoxville. Millions of Americans have only one insurer left in the exchange, if any. ObamaCare's regulations are driving out more and more insurers every day, leaving Americans with less choice and ultimately no choice.

Throwing more taxpayer money at this problem won't solve it. This will continue to happen all across this country as long as we have ObamaCare's harmful regulations on the books.

Knoxville, Tennessee, is the canary in the ObamaCare coal mine. Mr. Speaker, President Trump says he wants to repeal ObamaCare. He should send his healthcare people to Knoxville, talk and listen to our people, share my constituents' stories, show the American people that ObamaCare's regulations are the cause of our Nation's crisis and are limiting access to healthcare.

If President Trump goes before the Nation on national television and explains in understandable detail what is going on with ObamaCare now and how he is trying to fix it, the American people will rally once again to repeal ObamaCare's harmful government regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the *RECORD* this Wall Street Journal article written by Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at the Cato Institute.

[From the Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, 2017]

HOW OBAMACARE PUNISHES THE SICK (By Michael Cannon)

Republicans are nervous about repealing ObamaCare's supposed ban on discrimination against patients with pre-existing conditions. But a new study by Harvard and the University of Texas-Austin finds those rules penalize high-quality coverage for the sick, reward insurers who slash coverage for the sick, and leave patients unable to obtain adequate insurance.

The researchers estimate a patient with multiple sclerosis, for example, might file \$61,000 in claims. ObamaCare's rules let MS patients buy coverage for far less, forcing insurers to take a loss on every MS patient. That creates "an incentive to avoid enrolling people who are in worse health" by making policies "unattractive to people with expensive health conditions," the Kaiser Family Foundation explains.

To mitigate that perverse incentive, ObamaCare lobs all manner of taxpayer subsidies at insurers. Yet the researchers find insurers still receive just \$47,000 in revenue per MS patient—a \$14,000 loss per patient.

Predictably, that triggers a race to the bottom. Each year, whichever insurer offers the best MS coverage attracts the most MS patients and racks up the most losses. Insurers that offer high-quality coverage either leave the market, as many have, or slash their coverage. Let's call those losses what they are: penalties for offering high-quality coverage.

The result is lower-quality coverage—for MS, rheumatoid arthritis, infertility and other expensive conditions. The researchers

find these patients face higher cost-sharing (even for inexpensive drugs), more prior-authorization requirements, more mandatory substitutions, and often no coverage for the drugs they need, so that consumers “cannot be adequately insured.”

The study also corroborates reports that these rules are subjecting patients to higher deductibles and cost-sharing across the board, narrow networks that exclude leading cancer centers, inaccurate provider directories, and opaque cost-sharing. A coalition of 150 patient groups complains this government-fostered race to the bottom “completely undermines the goal of the ACA.”

It doesn't have to be like this. Employer plans offer drug coverage more comprehensive and sustainable than ObamaCare. The pre-2014 individual market made comprehensive coverage even more secure: High-cost patients were less likely to lose coverage than similar enrollees in employer plans. The individual market created innovative products like “pre-existing conditions insurance” that—for one-fifth the cost of health insurance—gave the uninsured the right to enroll in coverage at healthy-person premiums if they developed expensive conditions.

If anything, Republicans should fear not repealing ObamaCare's pre-existing-conditions rules. The Congressional Budget Office predicts a partial repeal would wipe out the individual market and cause nine million to lose coverage unnecessarily. And contrary to conventional wisdom, the consequences of those rules are wildly unpopular. In a new Cato Institute/YouGov poll, 63% of respondents initially supported ObamaCare's pre-existing-condition rules. That dropped to 31%—with 60% opposition—when they were told of the impact on quality.

Republicans can't keep their promise to repeal ObamaCare and improve access for the sick without repealing the ACA's penalties on high-quality coverage.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 55 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend M. Davies Kirkland, Dulin United Methodist Church, Falls Church, Virginia, offered the following prayer:

Gracious and loving God, we offer thanks for this day that You have given us, a day full of new beginnings, opportunities, and potential for our country.

We ask Your blessings upon these Representatives, their staffs, and all here who work through government to serve people of varied traditions, faiths, and races.

Give them guidance and strength as they debate, deliberate, and make difficult decisions on laws which will govern our country.

Give them patience and civility to listen compassionately, to show respect for each other, and to work together for the common good.

And, O God, give them hope. For though the path may seem perilous and the hurdles high, may hope sustain these public servants that they might accomplish the more perfect union that our forebears dreamed of: a more perfect union of justice, freedom, and liberty for all.

I pray this in Your Almighty name.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina 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.

WELCOMING REVEREND M. DAVIES KIRKLAND

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Pastor Dave Kirkland, who led us in the opening prayer. Pastor Kirkland is appointed as the pastor of Dulin United Methodist Church in Falls Church, Virginia, where he has been the pastor for the last 17 years.

Previously, he was appointed to Del Ray United Methodist Church in Alexandria, Virginia, for 6 years and associate pastor at Asbury United Methodist Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia, for 4 years.

Dave's passion in ministry is related to the great Commandment: to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

This is articulated in preaching, raising money, and good deeds performed

by the congregation through reaching out to the lost and the least.

A highlight of this ministry of hope at Dulin: over 60 homeless persons each Sunday morning are served a breakfast, attend a worship service, and are given toiletries and assistance cards to purchase items at Giant Food.

Dulin is engaged in several local ministries, such as Homeless Shelter, Homestretch, Rebuilding Together, and Meals on Wheels; and he also supports a child rescue center in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to welcome Pastor Dave today to the House of Representatives, and I personally thank him for offering the opening prayer.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HUIZENGA). The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

FORT JACKSON CENTENNIAL

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, this month marks the Fort Jackson Centennial, a celebration of 100 years of military service and opportunity at that extraordinary post.

As the largest initial entry training facility for the Army, Fort Jackson has been a leader in training in military readiness. Indeed, Fort Jackson recently achieved a remarkable milestone, having trained an estimated five million soldiers.

I know firsthand of the dedication and capability of Fort Jackson. As a member of the Army Reserve and the South Carolina Army National Guard and a graduate of the Adjutant General School, I trained at Fort Jackson. Additionally, three of my four sons have served in the South Carolina National Guard, receiving world class training at Fort Jackson.

I have also seen how Fort Jackson supports the Midlands community, promoting civilian and military jobs, providing strong leaders and volunteers for our community, drawing millions of visitors. This is why the Midlands has worked hard to become the most military-friendly community in America.

Congratulations to General Pete Johnson for a strong command at Fort Jackson. I look forward to continued success for American families. Victory starts here.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and may we never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

COST-SHARING REDUCTION PAYMENTS

(Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address

the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, last week, Secretary Price refused to say whether the administration would fulfill its obligation to make cost-sharing reduction payments. This is the latest in a string of actions to sabotage the individual health insurance markets and ultimately leave people paying more for their insurance premiums.

President Trump and the Republican majority have said that the Affordable Care Act is collapsing as a justification of taking away insurance from 23 million Americans, but the truth is they are taking active measures to drive uncertainty and undermine the law.

Insurers have little time left to finalize their rate filings for 2018, and without certainty as to whether or not cost-sharing subsidies will be paid, they will significantly raise their rates or exit the marketplaces altogether.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to cut out the games and make the cost-sharing reduction payments, and to stop actively trying to undermine Americans' access to affordable, quality health insurance.

Even my friend from Texas (Mr. BRADY), chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, called for the funding of insurer payments in order to help stabilize the insurance market and help lower premiums for Americans who rely on these subsidies.

There is simply no excuse for delay.

NATIONAL DAIRY MONTH

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, June is National Dairy Month, and, personally, I can't think of a better way to start the summer.

From calcium to potassium, dairy products, like milk, contain nine essential nutrients which may help to better manage your weight, reduce your risk for high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and certain cancers.

Whether it is a protein to help build and repair the muscle tissue of active bodies or vitamin A to help maintain healthy skin, dairy products are a natural nutrient powerhouse. Those are just a few of the reasons that we should celebrate dairy not just in June, but all year long.

National Dairy Month started out as National Milk Month in 1937 as a way to promote drinking milk. It was initially created to stabilize the dairy demand when production was at a surplus, but has now developed into an annual tradition that celebrates the contributions the dairy industry has made to the world.

Proudly, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is one of the largest milk-producing States in the Nation, certainly the largest agriculture commodity in Pennsylvania. As vice chairman of the

House Agriculture Committee and chairman of the Nutrition Subcommittee, I wish everyone a happy National Dairy Month.

RED SQUARE PROTEST BY YOUNG RUSSIANS

(Mr. HIGGINS of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, thousands of Russians took to the streets of Moscow's Red Square to protest President Putin's party of crooks and thieves. The protesters chanted that they want to make Russia free and that they want to live in a modern democratic state. They want democracy.

Today, in America, here in the Nation's Capitol, another Trump official is testifying before Congress on Russia's interference with U.S. elections for the fourth time in as many weeks. There is no doubt that Russia interfered. This we know. Did Russia interfere in coordination with Trump officials? With whom and to what extent? This is what the American people deserve to know.

Today, in America, the talk is how Putin tried to dishonor American democracy to do one thing, to keep his people from wanting it, the very democracy that is uniquely America's.

And yesterday, in Moscow, was about what Putin couldn't do. He couldn't keep young Russia from taking to the streets of his capital city denouncing him as a crook and a coward and demanding American democracy.

NEW AMERICANS CAUCUS' CALL TO VOTE

(Mrs. TORRES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today not only as a Member of Congress but as an immigrant and a proud American, and I and my fellow members of the New Americans Caucus took the step to not just become naturalized citizens and exercise our right to vote but also to get involved in our communities and eventually run for office.

This is why, today, I want to encourage all of those who can to do the same, become a citizen and get involved. Your vote is your voice. It allows you to use that voice to better your community and to speak up for those who still can't.

Citizenship is a security. Citizenship is power. These days, too much is at stake, so don't wait until it is too late.

CONGRATULATING COMMANDER KEITH WOODLEY

(Ms. PLASKETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, with this being Caribbean-American Herit-

age Month, I wanted to highlight and congratulate a native Virgin Islander who is now the new commander of the USS *Gabrielle Giffords*, which was commissioned this past weekend in Texas.

The USS *Gabrielle Giffords*, the 16th ship to be named for a woman and only the 13th ship to be named for a living person since 1850, is, in fact, commanded by Keith Woodley, a native of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, a graduate of Florida A&M and the Florida Institute of Technology.

At the commissioning of the ship, Commander Woodley stated: "This is not just a new ship. This is a new class of ship. . . . They have risen to that challenge and performed exceptionally well in getting this ship ready for service."

I would be remiss in not also acknowledging, during Caribbean-American Heritage month, Alton Adam, born in 1889, who was also from St. Thomas and the U.S. Navy's first bandmaster. His music was performed by numerous bands and continues to be performed.

I also, of course, want to wish my parents a happy 58th wedding anniversary today. We love you. God bless you.

TAKE ACTION ON A COMPREHENSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

(Mr. O'HALLERAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. O'HALLERAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address an issue impacting communities throughout Arizona's First Congressional District and the country. We must take action on a comprehensive infrastructure bill. Our crumbling roads and bridges pose a greater threat to safety with every car, truck, and school bus that crosses them.

Our pilots land on runways long overdue for repairs, and rural and travel communities, without access to modern technology, lose their competitive advantage in business and education.

In Arizona, flood control projects in Winslow, essential broadband access in Tuba City, and transportation infrastructure in rural Gila County are all in need of attention.

This is something that impacts every State, every district in this country, and I believe we can find broad bipartisan support on this issue in Congress.

Ensuring that our communities have adequate resources to repair their roads, invest in technology, and protect their residents is of paramount importance. I call on my colleagues to continue working on this.

We cannot push this issue aside any longer. We must come together and pass a bipartisan infrastructure bill that invests in our rural communities.

□ 1215

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE TERRIFIED OF TRUMPCARE

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, the American people are speaking up, and they are absolutely terrified of the Republican healthcare plan, TrumpCare. According to a FOX News poll, two-thirds of Americans disapprove of TrumpCare. That's a FOX News poll.

Why? Because it will take away healthcare from 23 million Americans. For those who still have the good fortune of being able to get insurance, they will pay more for worse care. If you are age 50 to 65, fasten your seatbelts; you are about to pay five times what others will pay for health insurance and for prescription drugs.

Of course, in the Senate, they are crafting their version of TrumpCare in secret, behind closed doors. Nobody knows what is in it. Why? Because they know the American people will reject it.

We know we have got issues we have to deal with in healthcare. No law is perfect, and the ACA is one of those. But my goodness, you cannot do this behind closed doors. We have to do this in public. People need to understand what Congress is doing. We have got to get it right, and we have to do it in the open.

SALUTING THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA ON ITS HISTORIC ASIAN TOUR

(Mr. EVANS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to support the Philadelphia Orchestra on a historical tour through Asia.

I have had the privilege of working to support them over the years during my time in the Pennsylvania Legislature and now here in Congress. I can't think of a better cultural ambassador for our country, the Commonwealth, and our great city than the finely tuned Philadelphia Orchestra.

The historical tour started in Shanghai, China, where they serenaded the visitors of the new Shanghai Disney Resort. They continued on to Beijing and Mongolia.

Philadelphia's magnificent orchestra marked a historical first when they became the first Western orchestra to play at the people-to-people exchange. The President of Mongolia and I met last year in the city of Philadelphia.

The orchestra then continued on to Seoul and to Hong Kong. In Seoul, the orchestra participated in a master class with the Heart to Heart Orchestra and Korea United College Orchestra. In Hong Kong, the Philadelphia Orchestra concluded with a coaching session for the Hong Kong Youth Orchestra and a well-earned reception.

I would like to give special recognition to the Philadelphia Orchestra's director, the chairman, as well as the woman who brought it all together, Allison Vulgamore.

I am proud to represent a city that boasts some of the most iconic music heard around the world. I welcome back our well-traveled Philadelphia Orchestra and look forward to the next symphony.

VA ACCOUNTABILITY

(Mr. YODER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. YODER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight Congress' making more important strides on behalf of our Nation's veterans.

The last few years, we have all heard stories about employees at the VA who failed in their duty to serve and protect our Nation's heroes. It is true that most VA employees are hardworking and dedicated, but as we have come to find out, there are bad actors who must be held accountable. Our veterans deserve nothing less.

Strangely, as the VA has tried to discipline these bad actors, the existing bureaucracy and red tape has stymied the Secretary's ability to do so. That is why the House today will pass the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, to create a more efficient and effective system to remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee for poor performance or misconduct.

Our bill still ensures due process and actually expands protections for whistleblowers, but, importantly, it will let the VA Secretary do his job and clean up the Department and protect our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, protecting those veterans isn't a political issue; it is a cause we must all champion. I encourage a bipartisan vote on today's bill.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, June 13, 2017.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on June 13, 2017, at 11:23 a.m.:

Appointment:
Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff
Commission on Native Children.

With best wishes, I am,
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

RESIGNATION AS CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC, June 13, 2017.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I, Jason Chaffetz, am submitting my resignation as the Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform effective immediately. It has been the privilege of a lifetime to serve in this position, and I look forward to continuing to serve as a member of this historic committee for the remainder of my time in office.

Sincerely,

JASON CHAFFETZ,
Chairman.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted.
There was no objection.

ELECTING MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the House Republican Conference, I send to the desk a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 381

Resolved, That the following named Members be, and are hereby, elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY: Mr. Rutherford.

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM: Mr. Gowdy, Chair.

Resolved, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, ranked as follows on the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM: Mr. Chaffetz, after Mr. Jordan.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2581, VERIFY FIRST ACT, AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF S. 1094, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT OF 2017

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 378 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 378

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 2581) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require the provision of social security numbers as a condition of receiving the health insurance premium tax credit. All points of order against

consideration of the bill are waived. The amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means now printed in the bill shall be considered as adopted. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, and on any further amendment thereto, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. Upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (S. 1094) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. The bill shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and on any amendment thereto to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs; and (2) one motion to commit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Colorado is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Colorado?

There was no objection.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the rule and the underlying legislation. This rule provides for debate on the final negotiated bill between the House and the Senate. This process began last Congress and resulted in the House passing H.R. 1259 in March of this year.

The Senate introduced and passed the version of the bill we have before us today by voice vote. It mirrors the reforms contained in Chairman ROE's bill that the House has already passed by a bipartisan vote.

Mr. Speaker, we often talk about veterans in this country: We thank them for their sacrifice; we applaud them at sporting events; we tell ourselves that we must take care of them, must repay them for the service to our Nation. But in the past few years, we have discovered that America's care for our veterans has been wholly inadequate. The Department of Veterans Affairs has failed them.

Shameful misconduct at the VA has been rampant, and it has hurt our veterans:

In 2014, we learned that the Phoenix VA concealed extremely long wait lines for patients and that up to 40 vets may have died while waiting for care at the facility;

Just last year, we discovered that a VA Hospital in Colorado Springs also falsified wait time records. The majority of patients at that hospital faced wait times over 30 days, and 28 patients had an average wait time of 76 days. One veteran is even thought to have committed suicide because he wasn't referred for mental healthcare, even though he had been deemed at risk for suicide.

That is why Congress needs to act. S. 1094, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017, allows the Secretary of the VA to hold all employees at the agency accountable for their conduct.

We desperately need this legislation, not because all the employees at the VA have problems. Quite the opposite. Most VA employees show up to work every day because they are passionate about serving our Nation's veterans. But there are bad apples, people who put our veterans in danger. These people must be held accountable, and, frankly, many of them must be fired.

This bill empowers the Secretary to reprimand, suspend, or remove VA employees who have engaged in misconduct. It also permits the Secretary to recoup bonuses if an employee performed poorly or conducted themselves inappropriately and to recoup relocation expenses for fraud, waste, or malfeasance.

The bill also bolsters protection for whistleblowers, creating an office within the VA devoted to protecting those who expose wrongdoing. Supervisors will be taught how to protect whistleblowers and will be held accountable for how well they do.

And the bill requires reporting to Congress on the performance of senior executives at the VA and on the outcomes of disciplinary actions at the agency.

You may be wondering why Congress has taken such an in-depth interest in an executive branch agency, and I will tell you why. It is our job.

The legislative branch was designed to oversee the executive branch. We appropriate the funds used to pay the salaries of everyone working at the VA. These funds come from the taxpayer. For the sake of the taxpayer, we must ensure that the VA is serving its purpose.

But this bill also empowers the Secretary of the VA, allowing him or her to take immediate action to protect veterans. We can't wait for long appeals processes when a bad employee on the front lines of a VA hospital is harming our veterans.

This legislation should not be controversial. Both Democrats and Republicans want the best for our veterans. This legislation, the legislation we are discussing today, gives the VA Sec-

retary and Congress more tools to hold employees accountable because if we are holding employees accountable, then we are protecting our veterans from abuse.

This bill is one small way to say thank you to those men and women who have served our country. We can never adequately repay them, but we can do our best to provide them with sufficient medical care.

I urge you to support this important legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from Colorado, for yielding me the necessary and customary 30 minutes for debate.

Mr. Speaker, I am here today to debate the rule for consideration of two separate pieces of legislation: S. 1094, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act; and H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act.

I begin with S. 1094, legislation aimed at bringing enhanced accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs and improving the care we provide to our Nation's veterans. Among other things, this bill codifies in law the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection at the VA and streamlines the process to demote, remove, or suspend VA employees if evidence proves they engaged in misconduct or poor performance.

Mr. Speaker, last night at the Rules Committee, we had the opportunity to hear from the chairman and ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee about this legislation, Dr. ROE and Mr. WALZ. They discussed the bipartisan nature in which they have worked on this issue, along with the bipartisan work done in the Senate, to craft legislation that they hope can achieve strong bipartisan support in this body.

It is because of this display of bipartisanship and cooperation and a semblance of regular order that I am dismayed that I must now address the process and substance by which we are considering the second bill encompassed in this rule, H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act.

□ 1230

Let me connect the dots for you on how we got to this point, and bear with me. The Republican majority's path to take healthcare from 23 million Americans has been as convoluted as it has been chaotic.

Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you and my colleagues should remember, first, the Republican mantra was repeal. Then it was repeal and replace. Then it was repeal and delay, followed by access to coverage, and then, patient centered.

Finally, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle settled on a three-bucket strategy. The first bucket of this strategy was the Republicans'

American Health Care Act. The majority brought their first iteration of this bill to the floor after working on it for 17 days, and, with no hearings, only to have it go down in flames in the most public and spectacular fashion.

So they went back to the drawing board—not to improve the bill, or improve healthcare for the American people, mind you, but to garner enough Republican votes for a bill that ultimately had 17 percent approval ratings. And they added a manager's amendment to get support, then they added another manager's amendment, then another, and another.

Then with a bill patched together with the wants and wishes of powerful healthcare lobbyists and tax breaks for the superwealthy, with no CBO score, and with no way for the American people, let alone their own Members, to actually know what was in the bill, the majority pushed the bill through the House of Representatives.

What did my Republican friends do after passing this inexplicably bad bill? They got on a couple of buses from here at the Capitol and went to a rose garden ceremony hosted by President Donald John Trump to celebrate upending one-sixth of the American economy and taking away healthcare from 23 million people.

That was certainly the Republicans' most recent mission-accomplished moment, and it must have been some celebration because it will be another 2 weeks before the majority would actually get around to sending their healthcare bill to the Senate, due to the fact that they were not sure if it complied with the Senate rules or, more specifically, the Byrd rule in the U.S. Senate.

Then there is the second bucket of this plan, which involves the Trump administration rolling back regulations. Should the work associated with the second bucket proceed as it has with the other two, then I am sure it, too, will be a disaster, benefitting the wealthy at the expense of hardworking Americans.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to the Republicans' third bucket. According to Senator TED CRUZ, this bucket is "a sucker's bucket." Indeed, some like Senator TOM COTTON have referred to all of this bucket talk as simply a bunch of political spin. Whatever it is, it is an empty bucket.

The most recent bill the Republican majority has decided to dump in this sucker's bucket is H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act. Under current law, premium assistance tax credits are available for eligible individuals and families to subsidize the cost of health insurance. Individuals are not eligible for these credits unless they are U.S. citizens or are living in the country legally.

Currently, applicants have 90 days to provide documentation or otherwise address any issues with citizenship and immigration status, and are presumed eligible to enroll in marketplace coverage. If an individual is unable to pro-

vide the necessary documentation, coverage and financial assistance are terminated.

This provision ensures that individuals are not left in a position of having to wait potentially months to be verified before they can afford coverage, and it provides the proper guardrails to terminate assistance if an individual is deemed ineligible. There is no evidence to support the majority's claim that this process is not working.

H.R. 2581 would repeal this 90-day verification period, setting up an unnecessary barrier for eligible individuals to receive the credits they need to afford lifesaving healthcare. Republicans themselves acknowledge that the verification process could take months, but, nevertheless, they are bringing forth today's bill knowing full well that it will make it harder for vulnerable people to access healthcare when they need it most.

It would disproportionately hurt low-income Americans, especially naturalized Americans from immigrant families since they can have a harder time producing documentation needed to verify their citizenship. But don't just take my word for it.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter signed by dozens and dozens of national, State, and local civil rights and advocacy groups strongly opposing this legislation, such groups as the NAACP, the Children's Defense Fund, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the American Friends Service Committee, the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy, and I could go on, and on, and on, but in the interest of time, I thank the Speaker for allowing it to be made a part of the RECORD.

JUNE 12, 2017.

DEAR MEMBER OF CONGRESS: As national, state, and local organizations concerned about immigrant rights or access to affordable health care, we are writing to strongly urge you to VOTE NO on H.R. 2581, the "Verify First" Act. This bill is an attack on people's ability to see a doctor and on immigrants and people of color. It is not the "common sense" taxpayer protection bill that its supporters would have you believe.

H.R. 2581 is a dangerous bill that puts up roadblocks for both citizens and immigrants to obtain timely, affordable health insurance. It would strip away provisions that provide for a person to obtain subsidies for enrollment in an Affordable Care Act (or the contemplated American Health Care Act) plan while they work with Department of Health and Human Services to verify their U.S. citizenship or immigration status. The people most impacted are U.S. citizens who were born abroad or naturalized. The bill also affects many immigrants, especially those newly arrived or certain victims of domestic violence and trafficking survivors.

The fact is that when individuals are not able to immediately verify their citizenship or immigration status on an Affordable Care Act Marketplace, it begins an often months long, strenuous process of sending in documents that must be physically inspected. Health care assisters routinely say these cli-

ents are the hardest cases they work on because the process for verifying citizenship and immigration status is a time-consuming exercise in dealing with inefficient government processes.

Rather than protect American taxpayers, H.R. 2581 would strip from American taxpayers important protections that are needed to overcome deficiencies in federal government databases. Immigrants who are not lawfully present are categorically barred from enrollment in health insurance on the Affordable Care Act marketplaces, and for the subsidies that make that insurance affordable. Moreover, safeguards protecting taxpayers are already built into the ACA; individuals whose citizenship or immigration status cannot be verified already are required to pay back all of their subsidies when they file their taxes and "reconcile" their premium tax credits.

Supporters of this bill cite a sloppy Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee report that arrived at a made-up number of supposed "fraud." It's just not true. The committee assumed that every person who lost coverage for failure to verify their citizenship and immigration status was undocumented. In the experience of our organizations and organizations we work with, this is false. These reports describe the first year of the marketplaces, and it is well documented that system outages and understaffing, among other technical problems, contributed to the federal Marketplace's failure to verify consumers' status promptly. The Department of Health and Human Services Inspector General reported in 2014 that a cause of the delay in verification was the agency's lack of prioritization of this issue.

Despite huge gains since then, problems still persist. The Social Security database holding many citizens' information may not reflect common changes, such as when a person marries and changes their last name, or when someone naturalizes and gains U.S. citizenship. People lose their coverage because they receive notices in languages they cannot read. Immigrants are required to submit documents multiple times, or wait while the Department of Homeland Security finds paper files, a result of deficiencies in their databases affecting groups like asylum applicants and some survivors of domestic violence. These are among the many issues consumers face.

Congress has already deprived undocumented immigrants from the ability to buy coverage, even at full price, so they can see a doctor when they are sick, but this bill would go a step further to delay or put out of reach affordable health insurance for many citizens and lawfully present immigrants. Our organizations firmly believe that this would be detrimental to the people we represent and to all of our communities as a whole. We have seen that when health insurance is unaffordable, people are effectively prevented from obtaining access to the care they need to be healthy.

This bill is not just an attack on our health care system, it is also an attack on immigrants and people of color, which our organizations stand firmly against. In his statements when introducing this bill, Rep. Lou Barletta focused the bill as part of his effort to "stop illegal immigration." Rep. Barletta has a long history of anti-immigrant rhetoric, from trying to prevent immigrants from leasing a residence to stating that they should be denied life-saving services in hospital emergency rooms. This bill is simply a vehicle for scapegoating immigrants and people of color and will keep eligible people from accessing health care.

We the undersigned organizations urge you to vote NO on H.R. 2581 and the continued assault on immigrants and the health of our communities.

Sincerely,

NATIONAL

Advocates for Youth; African American Ministers in Action; American Federation of Teachers (AFT); American Friends Service Committee; American Intercession; American Society on Aging; Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum; Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC; Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence; Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy & Leadership (APPEAL); Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO); Autistic Self Advocacy Network; Black Alliance for Just Immigration; Breast Cancer Action; Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP); Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.; Child Welfare League of America; Children's Advocacy Institute; Children's Defense Fund; Church World Service (CWS).

Coalition on Human Needs; Columbian Center for Advocacy and Outreach; Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces; Conscious Talk Radio; Detention Watch Network; Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund; Dominican Sisters; Dominicans of Sinsinawa; Family Equality Council; Farmworker Justice; First Focus Campaign for Children; Food Research & Action Center; Franciscan Sisters of the Poor IJPC; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Generations Inc.; GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality; Immigrant Legal Resource Center; Indivisible; Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas; Interfaith Worker Justice.

Irish Apostolate USA; Jobs With Justice; Justice in Aging; Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province; Lambda Legal; Leadership Team of the Pelican Sisters of North America; League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); Medical Mission Sisters; Mi Familia Vota; MomsRising; NAACP; NAPAFASA; National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum; National Association of County and City Health Officials; National Association of Social Workers; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Transgender Equality; National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA); National Council of Churches.

National Council of La Raza (NCLR); National Education Association; National Employment Law Project; National Health Law Program; National Hispanic Medical Association; National Immigrant Justice Center; National Immigration Law Center; National Justice for Our Neighbors; National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health; National Network of Abortion Funds; National Organization for Women; National Women's Health Network; Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ; NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice; NMAC; OCA—Asian Pacific American Advocates; Our Revolution; Peace and Justice Office of the Congregation of Notre Dame; Physicians for Reproductive Health; PICO National.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign; Prevention Institute; Project Inform; Racine Dominicans; Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need; Refuge Ministries; Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law; Service Employees International Union; Sisters of Charity; Sisters of Charity of Nazareth; Sisters of Mercy of the Americas—Institute Justice Team; South-

east Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC); The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights; United Sikhs; United We Dream; Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, U.S. Province; We Belong Together; API Wellness.

STATE AND LOCAL

Academy of Medical & Public Health Services; Advocates for Children and Youth; AgeOptions; Almost Home, Inc.; Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition; Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families; Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing; Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Los Angeles; Asian Community Alliance—Cincinnati OH; Asian Law Alliance; Asian Services In Action, Inc.; Baltimore Jewish Council; California Health Professional Student Alliance; California Immigrant Policy Center; California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ); California OneCare; California Pan-Ethnic Health Network; California Partnership; California Physicians Alliance; CASA.

Center for Southeast Asians; Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition; Child Care Resources of Rockland; Children Now; Children's Defense Fund—CA; Chinatown Service Center; Chinese-American Planning Council; Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA); Collaborative Center for Justice; Colorado Center on Law and Policy; Colorado Center on Law and Policy; Columbia Legal Services; Community Health Councils; D.C. Hunger Solutions; DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform; Empower Missouri; Ensuring Opportunity Campaign to End Poverty in Contra Costa; Erie Benedictines for Peace; Esperanza Health Centers; EverThrive Illinois; Farmworker Association of Florida.

Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC); Give for a Smile; Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness; Having Our Say Coalition; Health Access California; Health Care for All—WA; Health Law Advocates; Healthy House Within A MATCH Coalition; Hmong Ohio of Tomorrow; Hunger Action Los Angeles; IHM Sisters, Immaculata, PA; IL Hunger Coalition; Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights; Indivisible Mountain Home, Idaho; Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity; IRIS—Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services; Islamic Civic Engagement Project; Jewish Family & Children's Service; Kansas Appleseed; Kentucky Equal Justice Center; Korean Community Services of Metropolitan NY; La Fe Policy Research and Education Center.

La Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program; Legal Council for Health Justice; Legal Services of Southern Piedmont; Maine Consumers for Affordable Health Care; Make the Road New York; Maryland CASH Campaign; Maryland Hunger Solutions; Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA); Massachusetts Law Reform Institute; Maternal and Child Health Access; Maternity Care Coalition; National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter; National Tongan American Society; Nationalities Service Center; NC Child; New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty; New York Immigration Coalition; New York Legal Assistance Group; NICOS Chinese Health Coalition; NJ State Industrial Union Council; NOELA Community Health Center; Northern NJ Chapter, National Organization for Women.

Northwest Health Law Advocates; Northwest Immigrant Rights Project; Office of the Health Care Advocate at Vermont Legal Aid; OneAmerica; Pacific Islander Health Partnership; Pitkin County Human Services; Public Justice Center; Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA); Rainbow Center; Reformed Church of Highland Park; RESULTS—Santa Fe (NM); Salaam Cleveland; Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN); Sisters of Char-

ity of the Incarnate Word, Houston; Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, NY; Sisters of the Most Precious Blood; Social Justice Committee St. Patrick Church; South Asian Network; Southwest Women's Law Center; St. Francis St Vincent de Paul Society; Tennessee Justice Center; Thai Health And Information Service.

The Children's Partnership; The Latino Health Insurance Program, Inc.; Turning Points; United Way Bay Area; URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America; Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition; Virginia Poverty Law Center; Voices for Vermont's Children; Voz Hispana Cambia Comunitario; Washington Community Action Network; Washington Healthcare Access Alliance; Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; West Chester Food Cupboard; West Side Campaign Against Hunger; Westlake Chinese Culture Association; Wisconsin Council of Churches; Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice; Women's Action Movement Washtenaw County, MI; Worksite Wellness LA; Xaverian Brothers; Young Women United.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, "This bill," that letter says, "is an attack on people's ability to see a doctor and on immigrants and people of color."

"H.R. 2581 is a dangerous bill that puts up roadblocks for both citizens and immigrants to obtain timely, affordable health insurance."

If this is what we are in store for with the Republican's third bucket, then it is even worse than a sucker's bucket. It is callous, and it is cruel, and someone described the Vice Presidency once many years ago as a warm bucket of spit.

As my colleague, Congressman RICHARD NEAL, said last night at the Rules Committee, bad process leads to bad product. I agree with Mr. NEAL, and this bill is a perfect example of his salient insight. The provisions in this legislation are contingent upon enactment of the American Health Care Act.

If the American Health Care Act is enacted, this bill would not go into effect. That means we are now considering legislation amending a bill that we have already sent to the Senate, and that the Senate has made clear it has no intention of taking up.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. McCAUL), chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security.

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Colorado as well.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act. I helped introduce this legislation with my good friend and colleague, Mr. BARLETTA from Pennsylvania, to ensure illegal immigrants are not able to use healthcare tax credits to purchase health insurance.

Under ObamaCare, the Federal Government paid these tax credits up front on a temporary basis to people before verifying their immigration status. This created a pay-and-chase system where the Federal Government would seek repayment only after it found it had paid out benefits to an illegal immigrant.

This bill puts an end to this taxpayer abuse by requiring the Social Security Administration, or the Department of Homeland Security, to verify the immigration status of every tax credit applicant before the Treasury Department issues a credit.

Texans and hardworking taxpayers around the country already struggle to pay for their healthcare. Their hard-earned dollars should not be used to foot the bill for those who broke the law to come here. My constituents in Texas and American taxpayers deserve better.

I want to thank Congressman BARLETTA for his dedication and continued leadership on this issue, and, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RASKIN).

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

I rise only to express my real disappointment in the way that this bill has been brought to the floor. Had the majority not insisted on a closed rule, preventing the House from voting on any and all amendments to repair and improve S. 1094, I would have offered an amendment to ensure that it applies in a way that respects the due process rights of Federal workers, and that it would apply only to collective bargaining agreements ratified on or after enactment.

I support the goal of improving accountability at the VA, but I want to make sure it is not done in a way that prejudices and undermines the collective bargaining rights and the due process rights of the workforce.

There are real problems at the VA now, we know. There are 45- to 49,000 vacancies there. There is bureaucratic dysfunction in a lot of places, and all that this bill would do is to change the evidentiary standard of proof from the preponderance of the evidence to substantial evidence in leveling sanctions and discipline against employees.

That is a tiny detail. It is an irrelevant distraction from the massive problems that actually are facing the VA today. So we should be filling these vacancies. We should be improving the function of the VA, but we should not use this or that problem as an excuse to undermine the due process rights of the workforce. That sets a terrible example for the Federal workforce, generally, and it does nothing to repair the underlying problems and inadequacies that are taking place at the VA.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In response to my friend from Florida's statement about the second piece of legislation that we are dealing with in this rule, I believe it is our responsibility to the American taxpayer, and we are fulfilling that responsibility. We are expected to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. This bill ensures that the government only disburses pre-

mium tax credits under the Affordable Care Act, or under the American Health Care Act, to those individuals who are eligible for those tax credits.

Under the ACA, an individual who is not lawfully present in the United States is ineligible from receiving a premium credit. Unfortunately, the ACA also allows the government to hand out the tax credit first and verify later.

This pay-and-chase scheme means taxpayer money is flowing out the door to people who don't meet the requirements for premium tax credits, and much of these funds may not be recouped. In fact, under the ACA, over half a million people who were ineligible for coverage and tax credits received credits.

H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act, requires the Secretary of the Treasury to ensure that any department disbursing payments have first verified the recipient's legal presence with information like Social Security numbers. By requiring this verification, we can confirm that, under both the ACA and AHCA, those who receive credits deserve credits.

With that confirmation, we will ensure that these laws are used as they were intended; that the wishes of the American taxpayer are followed. I urge Members to support this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1245

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, Donald John Trump issued an executive order placing a hiring freeze on Federal civilian employees across the executive branch. This executive order, like many of the executive orders this President has issued, failed to take into account the effects it could have on our most vulnerable communities.

Veterans make up one-third of all Federal workers. I am very pleased that one is in my office. She is probably smiling because sometimes Charity probably doesn't think I even know that she is in the office. But she is there and does incredible work.

The Department of Veterans Affairs—a severely understaffed agency serving those veterans—cannot afford a hiring freeze.

This week, Republicans are bringing to the floor bills they claim would improve veterans' lives. If the President and my Republican colleagues are truly committed to our veterans, then they should ensure that reckless hiring freezes do not harm them in the future.

Mr. Speaker, if we defeat the previous question, I am going to offer an amendment to the rule to bring up Representative SCHRADER's bill, H.R. 696, which would prohibit any hiring freeze from affecting the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert in the RECORD the text of

my amendment, along with extraneous material, immediately prior to the vote on the previous question.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, what we have here today is a rule with one bill that really was worked on in a bipartisan manner—sort of like regular order like we were promised by the Speaker at the outset of this session of Congress—and another bill, which is just more of the same from this majority: creating problems where none existed before.

The fact remains that the Republicans' healthcare bill and overall bucket strategy is a disaster for the American people, and no amount of Rose Garden backslapping is going to change that fact.

Under the Republican plan, 23 million Americans will be kicked off of their health insurance and \$800 billion will be cut from Medicaid. Footnote right there, we hear that the Senate is taking up something. We don't know where and who is doing the taking up, but what I read today is that they are considering a glide path of some kind to cut Medicaid.

Mr. Speaker, cutting Medicaid hurts poor people. Whether you glide it or run it over them, either way you look at it, it hurts them, and we need to pay attention to that, particularly if we are doing it to provide for those of us that are better off in our society.

Seventy-five billion dollars will be cut from Medicare, insurance premiums would increase for people ages 60 to 64 by more than \$3,000 a year, and protections for those with preexisting conditions will be eliminated.

I read about a 63-year-old lady who said that all of her conditions are preexisting and she can't afford insurance. H.R. 2581 only adds to this pain by setting up an unnecessary barrier for eligible individuals to get access to healthcare.

But not to worry, under the Republican plan, the 400 highest income families would ultimately get tax cuts averaging around \$7 million a year, and that information comes from the Ways and Means Committee's fact sheet.

Mr. Speaker, I and others here very frequently have pointed out that what the Republicans want to do is to cut benefits for poor people—the most vulnerable in our society—and to provide for the better-off tax cuts—those people in our society who least need them.

It occurs to me that if we were to have an opportunity to ask the 400 wealthiest families in this country whether or not they really need a tax cut, my belief, based on the four billionaires that I have known personally—two are deceased now—but in my conversations with all of them, their position was that they didn't need a cut. To the man, each one of them said that, if they were to receive tax cuts, they would prefer that they go to education, particularly education for kindergarten and prekindergarten.

If my Republican colleagues can move past throwing red meat to their base—a group of people, mind you, who are most certainly disadvantaged—one day they are going to wake up and recognize that much of what we are doing here, even though they support it, many of the persons who are doing it, they, too, are caught up in this downward spiral that is involving healthcare in this country, the game that we are playing.

If we are willing to work in a serious manner to address the issues in our healthcare system, then I know that Democrats are ready to work with Republicans. But whatever is going on in the other body, I assure you, no Democrats in the other body are involved in.

Last night I asked the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee whether or not he knew what this bill looked like, and his answer was that he did not.

I also said what I repeat here, that people are hurting in this country. Whether it is ObamaCare that the Republicans, I believe, are going to find that it is going to be hard to fix, or whether it is the Affordable Care Act that is in some phantom hole over in the other body, somehow or another, my friends on the other side are going to be held accountable for all of what is necessary to be done. The only way that is sensible—and I believe that every American is imploring us to undertake—is to sit down together.

I cannot believe that the 435 people plus 6 here in the House of Representatives and the 100 United States Senators do not have the ability to do all of the things that are necessary in order for Americans to receive adequate healthcare and to lead with protecting the most vulnerable in our society.

It is ridiculous to talk about cutting Medicaid when more than 60 percent of the people on Medicaid are seniors that are in nursing homes.

What are we going to say to those families? How are we going to address them when it comes to the reality that they are confronted with while we are up here jaw jacking back and forth about whether or not it is ObamaCare or whether or not it is the Affordable Care Act that we can't seem to find.

Somewhere along the lines, we need to sit down and work together. Failure to do so is to our own peril and to the peril of the citizens of this great country of ours.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we are here discussing two important bills. One of them fulfills the congressional duty to steward taxpayer dollars well. We shouldn't be handing out tax credits to people without first checking their eligibility for their tax credits. This is common sense.

H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act, will require verification of legal presence in

this country before someone can receive a tax credit. It is only fair to the American people that we pass this legislation.

The other bill in this rule, S. 1094, protects our veterans from harm. We all have a commitment to repaying the men and women who have served this Nation in the military. These brave individuals have put much on the line and sacrificed so much time and opportunity. They deserve the best healthcare.

This legislation holds the VA accountable. We need to empower the VA Secretary to quickly fire employees who put our veterans in danger. We also need the VA to report to Congress so that the legislative branch can fulfill its oversight duties.

I thank the sponsors of these important bills—Senator RUBIO for S. 1094 and Representative BARLETTA for H.R. 2581.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a “yes” vote on the resolution, and I urge a “yes” vote on the underlying bills.

The material previously referred to by Mr. HASTINGS is as follows:

AN AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 378 OFFERED BY
MR. HASTINGS

At the end of the resolution, add the following new sections:

SEC. 3. Immediately upon adoption of this resolution the Speaker shall, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 696) to prohibit any hiring freeze from affecting the Department of Veterans Affairs. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. All points of order against provisions in the bill are waived. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions. If the Committee of the Whole rises and reports that it has come to no resolution on the bill, then on the next legislative day the House shall, immediately after the third daily order of business under clause 1 of rule XIV, resolve into the Committee of the Whole for further consideration of the bill.

SEC. 4. Clause 1(c) of rule XIX shall not apply to the consideration of H.R. 696.

THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT
IT REALLY MEANS

This vote, the vote on whether to order the previous question on a special rule, is not merely a procedural vote. A vote against ordering the previous question is a vote against the Republican majority agenda and a vote to allow the Democratic minority to offer an alternative plan. It is a vote about what the House should be debating.

Mr. Clarence Cannon's *Precedents of the House of Representatives* (VI, 308-311), describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as “a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House

being made by the Member in charge.” To defeat the previous question is to give the opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that “the refusal of the House to sustain the demand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition” in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R-Illinois) said: “The previous question having been refused, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald, who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition.”

The Republican majority may say “the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the resolution . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever.” But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the Republican Leadership Manual on the Legislative Process in the United States House of Representatives, (6th edition, page 135). Here's how the Republicans describe the previous question vote in their own manual: “Although it is generally not possible to amend the rule because the majority Member controlling the time will not yield for the purpose of offering an amendment, the same result may be achieved by voting down the previous question on the rule. . . . When the motion for the previous question is defeated, control of the time passes to the Member who led the opposition to ordering the previous question. That Member, because he then controls the time, may offer an amendment to the rule, or yield for the purpose of amendment.”

In Deschler's *Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives*, the subchapter titled “Amending Special Rules” states: “a refusal to order the previous question on such a rule [a special rule reported from the Committee on Rules] opens the resolution to amendment and further debate.” (Chapter 21, section 21.2) Section 21.3 continues: “Upon rejection of the motion for the previous question on a resolution reported from the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the previous question, who may offer a proper amendment or motion and who controls the time for debate thereon.”

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on a rule does have substantive policy implications. It is one of the only available tools for those who oppose the Republican majority's agenda and allows those with alternative views the opportunity to offer an alternative plan.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YODER). The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 and clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on ordering the previous question will be followed by 5-minute votes on adopting the resolution, if ordered, and agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 229, nays 189, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 302]

YEAS—229

Abraham	Gibbs	Olson
Aderholt	Gohmert	Palazzo
Allen	Goodlatte	Palmer
Amash	Gosar	Paulsen
Amodel	Gowdy	Pearce
Arrington	Graves (GA)	Perry
Babin	Graves (LA)	Pittenger
Bacon	Graves (MO)	Poe (TX)
Banks (IN)	Grothman	Poliquin
Barletta	Guthrie	Posey
Barr	Harper	Ratcliffe
Barton	Harris	Reed
Bergman	Hartzler	Reichert
Biggs	Herrera Beutler	Renacci
Bilirakis	Herrera Beutler	Rice (SC)
Bishop (MI)	Hice, Jody B.	Roby
Bishop (UT)	Hill	Roe (TN)
Black	Holding	Rogers (AL)
Blackburn	Hollingsworth	Rogers (KY)
Blum	Hudson	Rohrabacher
Bost	Huizenga	Rokita
Brady (TX)	Hultgren	Rooney, Francis
Brat	Hunter	Rooney, Thomas
Bridenstine	Hurd	J.
Brooks (IN)	Issa	Ros-Lehtinen
Buchanan	Jenkins (KS)	Roskam
Buck	Jenkins (WV)	Ross
Bucshon	Johnson (LA)	Rothfus
Budd	Johnson (OH)	Rouzer
Burgess	Jordan	Royce (CA)
Byrne	Joyce (OH)	Russell
Calvert	Katko	Rutherford
Carter (GA)	Kelly (MS)	Sanford
Carter (TX)	Kelly (PA)	Scalise
Chabot	King (IA)	Schweikert
Chaffetz	King (NY)	Scott, Austin
Cheney	Kinzinger	Sensenbrenner
Coffman	Knight	Sessions
Cole	Kustoff (TN)	Shimkus
Collins (GA)	Labrador	Shuster
Collins (NY)	LaHood	Simpson
Comer	LaMalfa	Smith (MO)
Comstock	Lamborn	Smith (NE)
Conaway	Lance	Smith (NJ)
Cook	Latta	Smith (TX)
Costello (PA)	Lewis (MN)	Smucker
Cramer	LoBiondo	Stefanik
Crawford	Long	Stewart
Culberson	Loudermilk	Stivers
Curbelo (FL)	Love	Tenney
Davidson	Lucas	Thompson (PA)
Davis, Rodney	Luetkemeyer	Thornberry
Denham	MacArthur	Tiberi
Dent	Marchant	Tipton
DeSantis	Marino	Trott
DesJarlais	Marshall	Turner
Diaz-Balart	Massie	Upton
Donovan	Mast	Valadao
Duffy	McCarthy	Wagner
Duncan (SC)	McCaul	Walberg
Duncan (TN)	McClintock	Walden
Dunn	McHenry	Walker
Emmer	McKinley	Walorski
Estes (KS)	McMorris	Walters, Mimi
Farenthold	Rodgers	Webster (FL)
Faso	McSally	Wenstrup
Ferguson	Meadows	Westerman
Fitzpatrick	Meehan	Williams
Fleischmann	Messer	Wilson (SC)
Flores	Mitchell	Wittman
Fortenberry	Moolenaar	Womack
Foxx	Mooney (WV)	Woodall
Franks (AZ)	Mullin	Yoder
Frelinghuysen	Murphy (PA)	Yoho
Gaetz	Newhouse	Young (AK)
Gallagher	Noem	Young (IA)
Garrett	Nunes	Zeldin

NAYS—189

Adams	Brady (PA)	Cicilline
Aguilar	Brown (MD)	Clark (MA)
Barragán	Brownley (CA)	Clarke (NY)
Bass	Bustos	Clay
Beatty	Butterfield	Cleaver
Bera	Capuano	Clyburn
Beyer	Carbajal	Cohen
Bishop (GA)	Cárdenas	Connolly
Blumenauer	Carson (IN)	Conyers
Blunt Rochester	Cartwright	Cooper
Bonamici	Castor (FL)	Correa
Boyle, Brendan	Castro (TX)	Costa
F.	Chu, Judy	Courtney

Crist	Khanna
Crowley	Kihuen
Cuellar	Kildee
Davis (CA)	Kilmer
Davis, Danny	Kind
DeFazio	Krishnamoorthi
DeGette	Kuster (NH)
Delaney	Langevin
DeLauro	Larsen (WA)
DelBene	Larson (CT)
Demings	Lawrence
DeSaulnier	Lawson (FL)
Deutch	Lee
Dingell	Levin
Doggett	Lewis (GA)
Doyle, Michael	Lieu, Ted
F.	Lipinski
Ellison	Loeb
Engel	Lofgren
Eshoo	Lowe
Espallat	Lujan Grisham,
Esty (CT)	M.
Evans	Lujan, Ben Ray
Foster	Lynch
Frankel (FL)	Maloney,
Fudge	Carolyn B.
Gabbard	Maloney, Sean
Gallo	Matsui
Garamendi	McCollum
Gonzalez (TX)	McEachin
Gottheimer	McNerney
Green, Al	Meeks
Green, Gene	Meng
Grijalva	Moore
Gutiérrez	Moulton
Hanabusa	Murphy (FL)
Hastings	Nadler
Heck	Neal
Higgins (NY)	Nolan
Himes	Norcross
Hoyer	O'Halleran
Huffman	O'Rourke
Jackson Lee	Pallone
Jayapal	Panetta
Jeffries	Pascrell
Johnson (GA)	Payne
Johnson, E. B.	Perlmutter
Jones	Peters
Kaptur	Peterson
Keating	Pegree
Kelly (IL)	Pocan
Kennedy	Polis

NOT VOTING—12

Brooks (AL)	Higgins (LA)	Napolitano
Cummings	Johnson, Sam	Pelosi
Granger	Lowenthal	Taylor
Griffith	McGovern	Weber (TX)

□ 1321

Mses. JAYAPAL and WILSON of Florida changed their vote from “yea” to “nay.”

So the previous question was ordered.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 229, noes 190, not voting 11, as follows:

[Roll No. 303]

AYES—229

Abraham	Barletta	Blackburn
Aderholt	Barr	Blum
Allen	Barton	Bost
Amash	Bergman	Brady (TX)
Amodel	Biggs	Brat
Arrington	Bilirakis	Bridenstine
Babin	Bishop (MI)	Brooks (IN)
Bacon	Bishop (UT)	Buchanan
Banks (IN)	Black	Buck

Price (NC)	Bucshon	Hollingsworth	Posey
Quigley	Budd	Hudson	Ratcliffe
Raskin	Burgess	Hultgren	Reed
Rice (NY)	Byrne	Hunter	Reichert
Richmond	Calvert	Hurd	Renacci
Rosen	Carter (GA)	Issa	Rice (SC)
Roybal-Allard	Carter (TX)	Jenkins (KS)	Roby
Ruiz	Chabot	Jenkins (WV)	Roe (TN)
Ruppersberger	Chaffetz	Johnson (LA)	Rogers (AL)
Rush	Cheney	Johnson (OH)	Rogers (KY)
Ryan (OH)	Coffman	Jones	Rohrabacher
Sánchez	Cole	Jordan	Rokita
Sarbanes	Collins (GA)	Joyce (OH)	Rooney, Francis
Schakowsky	Collins (NY)	Katko	Rooney, Thomas
Schiff	Comer	Kelly (MS)	J.
Schneider	Comstock	Kelly (PA)	Ros-Lehtinen
Schrader	Conaway	King (IA)	Roskam
Scott (VA)	Cook	King (NY)	Ross
Scott, David	Costello (PA)	Kinzinger	Rothfus
Serrano	Cramer	Knight	Rouzer
Sewell (AL)	Crawford	Kustoff (TN)	Royce (CA)
Shea-Porter	Culberson	Labrador	Russell
Sherman	Curbelo (FL)	LaHood	Rutherford
Sinema	Davidson	LaMalfa	Sanford
Sires	Davis, Rodney	Lamborn	Scalise
Slaughter	Denham	Lance	Schweikert
Smith (WA)	Dent	Latta	Scott, Austin
Soto	DeSantis	Lewis (MN)	Sensenbrenner
Speier	DesJarlais	LoBiondo	Sessions
Suozi	Diaz-Balart	Long	Shimkus
Swalwell (CA)	Donovan	Loudermilk	Shuster
Takano	Duffy	Love	Simpson
Thompson (CA)	Duncan (SC)	Lucas	Smith (MO)
Thompson (MS)	Duncan (TN)	Luetkemeyer	Smith (NE)
Titus	Dunn	MacArthur	Smith (NJ)
Tonko	Emmer	Marchant	Smith (TX)
Torres	Estes (KS)	Marino	Smucker
Tsongas	Farenthold	Marshall	Stefanik
Vargas	Faso	Massie	Stewart
Veasey	Ferguson	Mast	Stivers
Vela	Fitzpatrick	McCarthy	Tenney
Velázquez	Fleischmann	McCaul	Thompson (PA)
Visclosky	Flores	McClintock	Thornberry
Walz	Fortenberry	McHenry	Tiberi
Wasserman	Foxx	McKinley	Tipton
Schultz	Franks (AZ)	McMorris	Trott
Waters, Maxine	Frelinghuysen	Rodgers	Turner
Watson Coleman	Gaetz	McSally	Upton
Welch	Gallagher	Meadows	Valadao
Wilson (FL)	Garrett	Meehan	Wagner
Yarmuth	Gibbs	Messer	Walberg
	Gohmert	Mitchell	Walden
	Goodlatte	Moolenaar	Walker
	Gosar	Mooney (WV)	Walorski
	Gowdy	Mullin	Walters, Mimi
	Graves (GA)	Murphy (PA)	Webster (FL)
	Graves (LA)	Newhouse	Wenstrup
	Graves (MO)	Nunes	Westerman
	Grothman	Olson	Williams
	Guthrie	Palazzo	Wilson (SC)
	Harper	Palmer	Wittman
	Harris	Paulsen	Womack
	Hartzler	Pearce	Woodall
	Hensarling	Perry	Yoder
	Herrera Beutler	Pittenger	Yoho
	Hice, Jody B.	Poe (TX)	Young (AK)
	Hill	Poliquin	Young (IA)
	Holding		Zeldin

NOES—190

Adams	Clay	Eshoo
Aguilar	Cleaver	Espallat
Barragán	Clyburn	Esty (CT)
Bass	Cohen	Evans
Beatty	Connolly	Foster
Bera	Conyers	Frankel (FL)
Beyer	Cooper	Fudge
Bishop (GA)	Correa	Gabbard
Blumenauer	Costa	Gallo
Blunt Rochester	Courtney	Garamendi
Bonamici	Crist	Gonzalez (TX)
Boyle, Brendan	Crowley	Gottheimer
F.	Cuellar	Green, Al
Brady (PA)	Davis (CA)	Green, Gene
Brown (MD)	Davis, Danny	Grijalva
Brownley (CA)	DeFazio	Gutiérrez
Bustos	DeGette	Hanabusa
Butterfield	Delaney	Hastings
Capuano	DeLauro	Heck
Carbajal	Carbajal	Higgins (NY)
Cárdenas	Demings	Himes
Carson (IN)	DeSaulnier	Hoyer
Cartwright	Deutch	Huffman
Castor (FL)	Dingell	Jackson Lee
Castro (TX)	Doggett	Jayapal
Chu, Judy	Doyle, Michael	Jeffries
Cicilline	F.	Johnson (GA)
Clark (MA)	Ellison	Johnson, E. B.
Clarke (NY)	Engel	Kaptur

Keating	Meeks	Schneider
Kelly (IL)	Meng	Schrader
Kennedy	Moore	Scott (VA)
Khanna	Moulton	Scott, David
Kihuen	Murphy (FL)	Serrano
Kildee	Nadler	Sewell (AL)
Kilmer	Neal	Shea-Porter
Kind	Nolan	Sherman
Krishnamoorthi	Norcross	Sinema
Kuster (NH)	O'Halleran	Sires
Langevin	O'Rourke	Slaughter
Larsen (WA)	Pallone	Smith (WA)
Larson (CT)	Panetta	Soto
Lawrence	Pascrell	Speier
Lawson (FL)	Payne	Suozi
Lee	Perlmutter	Swalwell (CA)
Levin	Peters	Takano
Lewis (GA)	Peterson	Thompson (CA)
Lieu, Ted	Pingree	Thompson (MS)
Lipinski	Pocan	Titus
Loeb sack	Polis	Tonko
Lofgren	Price (NC)	Torres
Lowenthal	Quigley	Tsongas
Lowey	Raskin	Vargas
Lujan Grisham, M.	Rice (NY)	Veasey
Luján, Ben Ray	Richmond	Vela
Lynch	Rosen	Velázquez
Maloney,	Roybal-Allard	Visclosky
Carolyn B.	Ruiz	Walz
Maloney, Sean	Ruppersberger	Wasserman
Matsui	Rush	Schultz
McCollum	Ryan (OH)	Waters, Maxine
McEachin	Sánchez	Watson Coleman
McGovern	Sarbanes	Welch
McNerney	Schakowsky	Wilson (FL)
	Schiff	Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—11

Brooks (AL)	Higgins (LA)	Pelosi
Cummings	Huizenga	Taylor
Granger	Johnson, Sam	Weber (TX)
Griffith	Napolitano	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). There are 2 minutes remaining.

□ 1327

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. HUIZENGA. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall No. 303.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today regarding a missed vote due to a meeting with constituents on the House steps. Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 303, H. Res. 378, The Rule providing for consideration of the bill H.R. 2581—Verify First Act and S. 1094—Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, I would have voted "yea."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I was absent during rollcall votes No. 302 and No. 303 due to my spouse's health situation in California. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on the Motion on Ordering the Previous Question on the Rule providing for consideration of both H.R. 2581 and S. 1094. I would have also voted "nay" on H. Res. 378—Rule providing for consideration of both H.R. 2581—Verify First Act and S. 1094—Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to report my absence on the vote of the H. Res. 378, the combined rule providing for consideration of H.R. 2581 and S. 1094, as well as the vote on the previous question. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on

rollcall No. 302 (Previous Question on H. Res. 378), and "yea" on rollcall No. 303 (Adoption of H. Res. 378).

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 238, nays 166, answered "present" 2, not voting 24, as follows:

[Roll No. 304]

YEAS—238

Abraham	Duncan (TN)	McMorris
Adams	Dunn	Rodgers
Aderholt	Emmer	McNerney
Allen	Engel	Meadows
Amodei	Estes (KS)	Meehan
Arrington	Esty (CT)	Meeks
Babin	Ferguson	Meng
Bacon	Fleischmann	Messer
Banks (IN)	Portenberry	Mitchell
Barletta	Foster	Moolenaar
Barr	Frelinghuysen	Mooney (WV)
Beatty	Gabbard	Moulton
Bergman	Garamendi	Mullin
Bilirakis	Garrett	Murphy (FL)
Bishop (GA)	Goodlatte	Nadler
Bishop (MI)	Gottheimer	Newhouse
Bishop (UT)	Gowdy	Noem
Black	Green, Al	Nunes
Blackburn	Guthrie	O'Rourke
Blumenauer	Hanabusa	Olson
Blunt Rochester	Harper	Palazzo
Bonamici	Harris	Palmer
Brady (TX)	Hartzler	Panetta
Brat	Heck	Pascrell
Bridenstine	Hensarling	Pearce
Brooks (IN)	Higgins (LA)	Perlmutter
Brown (MD)	Higgins (NY)	Pingree
Buchanan	Hill	Pocan
Bucshon	Himes	Polis
Budd	Hollingsworth	Posey
Bustos	Huffman	Quigley
Butterfield	Huizenga	Reichert
Byrne	Hultgren	Richmond
Calvert	Hunter	Roby
Carson (IN)	Jeffries	Roe (TN)
Carter (TX)	Johnson (GA)	Rogers (AL)
Cartwright	Johnson (LA)	Rogers (KY)
Castro (TX)	Johnson, E. B.	Rooney, Francis
Chabot	Kaptur	Rooney, Thomas J.
Chaffetz	Katko	Roskam
Cheney	Kelly (MS)	Ross
Chu, Judy	Kelly (PA)	Rothfus
Ciavarella	Kildee	Ruppersberger
Clay	King (IA)	Rush
Cleaver	King (NY)	Russell
Clyburn	Krishnamoorthi	Rutherford
Cole	Kuster (NH)	Ryan (OH)
Collins (NY)	Kustoff (TN)	Scalise
Comstock	LaMalfa	Schneider
Cook	Lamborn	Schweikert
Cooper	Larsen (WA)	Scott (VA)
Cramer	Larson (CT)	Scott, David
Crawford	Lewis (MN)	Sensenbrenner
Cuellar	Lipinski	Serrano
Culberson	Long	Sessions
Davidson	Loudermilk	Shea-Porter
Davis (CA)	Love	Sherman
Davis, Danny	Lucas	Shimkus
DeGette	Luetkemeyer	Shuster
DeLauro	Lujan Grisham, M.	Simpson
DelBene	Luján, Ben Ray	Smith (NE)
Demings	Marchant	Smith (NJ)
Denham	Marino	Smith (TX)
Dent	Marshall	Smith (WA)
DeSaulnier	Massie	Smucker
DesJarlais	Mast	Speier
Deutch	McCarthy	Stefanik
Diaz-Balart	McCaul	Stewart
Dingell	McClintock	Suozi
Doggett	McCollum	Takano
Donovan	McEachin	Tenney
Duffy	McHenry	Thornberry
Duncan (SC)		

Titus	Walters, Mimi	Williams
Torres	Walz	Wilson (SC)
Trott	Wasserman	Wittman
Tsongas	Schultz	Womack
Velázquez	Webster (FL)	Yarmuth
Walden	Welch	Young (IA)
Walker	Wenstrup	Zeldin
Walorski	Westerman	

NAYS—166

Aguilar	Gosar	Nolan
Amash	Graves (GA)	Norcross
Barragán	Graves (LA)	O'Halleran
Barton	Graves (MO)	Pallone
Bass	Green, Gene	Paulsen
Beyer	Grothman	Payne
Biggs	Gutiérrez	Perry
Blum	Hastings	Peters
Bost	Herrera Beutler	Peterson
Boyle, Brendan F.	Hice, Jody B.	Pittenger
Brady (PA)	Holding	Poe (TX)
Brownley (CA)	Hoyer	Poliquin
Buck	Hudson	Price (NC)
Burgess	Hurd	Ratcliffe
Capuano	Jackson Lee	Reed
Carbajal	Jayapal	Renacci
Cárdenas	Jenkins (KS)	Rice (NY)
Carter (GA)	Jenkins (WV)	Rohrabacher
Castor (FL)	Johnson (OH)	Rokita
Clark (MA)	Jones	Ros-Lehtinen
Clarke (NY)	Jordan	Rosen
Coffman	Joyce (OH)	Rouzer
Cohen	Keating	Roybal-Allard
Collins (GA)	Kennedy	Ruiz
Comer	Khanna	Sánchez
Conaway	Kihuen	Sanford
Connolly	Kilmer	Sarbanes
Conyers	Kind	Schakowsky
Correa	Kinzing	Schiff
Costa	Knight	Schrader
Costello (PA)	LaHood	Scott, Austin
Courtney	Lance	Sewell (AL)
Crist	Langevin	Sinema
Crowley	Latta	Smith (MO)
Curbelo (FL)	Lawrence	Soto
Davis, Rodney	Lawson (FL)	Stivers
DeFazio	Lee	Swalwell (CA)
Delaney	Levin	Thompson (CA)
DeSantis	Lewis (GA)	Thompson (MS)
Doyle, Michael F.	Lieu, Ted	Thompson (PA)
Ellison	LoBiondo	Tipton
Españillat	Loeb sack	Turner
Evans	Lofgren	Upton
Farenthold	Lowenthal	Valadao
Faso	Lowey	Vargas
Fitzpatrick	Lynch	Veasey
Flores	MacArthur	Vela
Fox	Maloney, Sean	Visclosky
Franks (AZ)	Carolyn B.	Walberg
Fudge	Matsui	Waters, Maxine
Gaetz	McGovern	Watson Coleman
Gallagher	McKinley	Wilson (FL)
Galleo	McSally	Woodall
Gibbs	Moore	Yoder
Gonzalez (TX)	Murphy (PA)	Young (AK)
	Neal	

ANSWERED "PRESENT"—2

Rice (SC)	Tonko
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NOT VOTING—24

Bera	Grijalva	Royce (CA)
Brooks (AL)	Issa	Sires
Cummings	Johnson, Sam	Slaughter
Eshoo	Kelly (IL)	Taylor
Frankel (FL)	Labrador	Tiberi
Gohmert	Napolitano	Wagner
Granger	Pelosi	Weber (TX)
Griffith	Raskin	Yoho

□ 1334

Messrs. RENACCI and CURBELO of Florida changed their vote from "yea" to "nay."

So the Journal was approved.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated for:

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall No. 304.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Speaker, I was absent for the initial vote series due to my attendance of

the funeral of Kyle Milliken. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on rollcall No. 302, “yea” on rollcall No. 303, and “yea” on rollcall No. 304.

VERIFY FIRST ACT

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 378, I call up the bill (H.R. 2581) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require the provision of social security numbers as a condition of receiving the health insurance premium tax credit, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MITCHELL). Pursuant to House Resolution 378, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means, printed in the bill, shall be considered as adopted, and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 2581

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Verify First Act”.

SEC. 2. VERIFICATION OF STATUS IN UNITED STATES AS CONDITION OF RECEIVING ADVANCE PAYMENT OF HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX CREDIT.

(a) APPLICATION TO CURRENT HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX CREDIT.—Section 36B of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as in effect for months beginning before January 1, 2020, is amended by redesignating subsection (g) as subsection (h) and by inserting after subsection (f) the following new subsection:

“(g) VERIFICATION OF STATUS IN UNITED STATES FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT.—No advance payment of the credit allowed under this section with respect to any premium under subsection (b)(2)(A) with respect to any individual shall be made under section 1412 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act unless the Secretary has received confirmation from the Secretary of Health and Human Services that the Commissioner of Social Security or the Secretary of Homeland Security has verified under section 1411(c)(2) of such Act the individual’s status as a citizen or national of the United States or an alien lawfully present in the United States using a process that includes the appropriate use of information related to citizenship or immigration status, such as social security account numbers (but not individual taxpayer identification numbers).”.

(b) APPLICATION TO NEW HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX CREDIT.—Section 36B of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended by the American Health Care Act of 2017 and in effect for months beginning after December 31, 2019, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h) VERIFICATION OF STATUS IN UNITED STATES FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT.—No advance payment of the credit allowed under this section with respect to any amount under subparagraph (A) or (B) of subsection (b)(1) with respect to any individual shall be made under section 1412 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act unless the Secretary has received confirmation from the Secretary of Health and Human Services that the Commissioner of Social Security or the Secretary of Homeland Security has verified under section 1411(c)(2) of such Act the

individual’s status as a citizen or national of the United States or a qualified alien (within the meaning of section 431 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (8 U.S.C. 1641)) using a process that includes the appropriate use of information related to citizenship or immigration status, such as social security account numbers (but not individual taxpayer identification numbers).”.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT ON CONTINUOUS HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE PROVISION.—Section 2710A(b)(1) of the Public Health Service Act, as added by section 133 of the American Health Care Act of 2017, is amended by adding after subparagraph (C) the following:

“In the case of an individual who applies for advance payment of a credit under section 1412 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and for whom a determination of eligibility for such advance payment is delayed by reason of the requirement for verification of the individual’s status in the United States under section 1411(c)(2) of such Act, the period of days beginning with the date of application for advance payment and ending with the date of such verification shall not be taken into account in applying subparagraph (B). The Secretary shall establish a procedure by which information relating to this period is provided to the individual.”.

(d) DELAY PERMITTED IN COVERAGE DATE IN CASE OF DELAY IN VERIFICATION OF STATUS FOR INDIVIDUALS APPLYING FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT OF CREDIT.—Section 1411(e) of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18081(e)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3), by inserting after “applicant’s eligibility” the following: “(other than eligibility for advance payment of a credit under section 1412)”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(5) DELAY PERMITTED IN COVERAGE DATE IN CASE OF DELAY IN VERIFICATION OF STATUS FOR INDIVIDUALS APPLYING FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT OF CREDIT.—In the case of an individual whose eligibility for advance payments is delayed by reason of the requirement for verification under subsection (c)(2), if, for coverage to be effective as of the date requested in the individual’s application for enrollment, the individual would (but for this paragraph) be required to pay 2 or more months of retroactive premiums, the individual shall be provided the option to elect to postpone the effective date of coverage to the date that is not more than 1 month later than the date requested in the individual’s application for enrollment.”.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATES.—

(1) APPLICATION TO CURRENT HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX CREDIT.—The amendment made by subsection (a) is contingent upon the enactment of the American Health Care Act of 2017 and shall apply (if at all) to months beginning after December 31, 2017.

(2) APPLICATION TO NEW HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX CREDIT.—The amendment made by subsection (b) is contingent upon the enactment of the American Health Care Act of 2017 and shall apply (if at all) to months beginning after December 31, 2019, in taxable years ending after such date.

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENT ON CONTINUOUS HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE PROVISION.—The amendment made by subsection (c) is contingent upon the enactment of the American Health Care Act of 2017 and shall take effect (if at all) as if included in such Act.

(4) FLEXIBILITY IN COVERAGE DATE IN CASE OF DELAY IN VERIFICATION OF STATUS.—The amendment made by subsection (d) is contingent upon the enactment of the American Health Care Act of 2017 and shall apply (if at all) to applications for advance payments for months beginning after December 31, 2017.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) and

the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SÁNCHEZ) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill currently under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Last month House Republicans took a significant step to return patient-centered healthcare to the American people. We passed the American Health Care Act. The American Health Care Act begins our step-by-step process to repeal ObamaCare and replace this collapsing law with a 21st century healthcare system that truly works for American families, job creators, our States, and our taxpayers.

Now, as work on the American Health Care Act moves forward in the Senate, we are moving forward on a parallel track to deliver more solutions for the American people. One of those is the Verify First Act, sponsored by Congressman LOU BARLETTA of Pennsylvania.

This legislation takes important action to protect taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse. It prevents the American Health Care Act’s monthly tax credits and ObamaCare’s current subsidies from being dispensed until the legal status of an eligible recipient can be verified.

Under ObamaCare, people who are in the United States illegally are prohibited from receiving taxpayer-funded subsidies to help purchase health insurance; but like so many aspects of ObamaCare, there is a major defect. ObamaCare starts by assuming a person is a legal resident and sends the money right away even if the verification process is still incomplete.

As we have seen with so many Federal programs, it is all but impossible to get fraudulently claimed money back after it is already out the door. This flaw of ObamaCare is no different. It has resulted in taxpayer-funded subsidies being spent on people who are not in the United States legally and, therefore, not eligible to receive them.

My constituents in Texas and yours around the country work too hard to see their tax dollars wasted by Washington’s carelessness. The best solution to protect taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse is to stop it before it occurs, and that is what the Verify First Act by Mr. BARLETTA will do.

This bill strengthens existing verification tools by making a commonsense change. Rather than sending the money first and confirming legal status later, it verifies legal status up

front. So if you want to receive financial support for health insurance, this bill simply requires that you first provide a Social Security number or another form of acceptable information to validate citizenship or immigration status.

This commonsense change will apply to ObamaCare beginning with next year's open enrollment period, and after ObamaCare is repealed, it will apply to the tax credits offered in the American Health Care Act when they take effect. This helps ensure that taxpayer-funded assistance for the purchase of health insurance is only distributed to people who are eligible, not to those who are in our country illegally.

I want to thank Congressman BARLETTA for his leadership on this important legislation. The Verify First Act is a much-needed solution to safeguard taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse both now and in the future, and that is crucial as we continue our efforts to repeal and replace the failing ObamaCare law. It is vital to improving America's health system for the long term.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting the passage of the Verify First Act, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I can't believe we are here today attempting to pass such a blatantly discriminatory bill. Under the guise of fighting fraud, Republicans are attempting to pass a bill that will put additional barriers to care for all Americans—all this in exchange for one Member's vote for TrumpCare, which guts healthcare for 23 million Americans, and the Republicans barely passed that bill out of the House.

This bill fails to recognize the diversity of American families; instead, it forces a single approach for all those who need financial help to get the care that they need.

I don't know if everyone on the other side of the aisle knows this, but there are already measures in place to prevent advanced premium tax credits from going to ineligible people. There is already a mechanism in place for Treasury to reconcile tax credits, and any undocumented individual found to have received a subsidy must repay them in full.

The other side will also try to make the argument that this measure will help fight fraud in the healthcare system, that there is somehow overwhelming amounts of evidence that immigrants are the main perpetrators of fraud. Beneficiaries struggling to access care are not the perpetrators of fraud. These are good people trying to do right by their families and by their country.

Of course, my colleagues over there are going to cite a Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs report, written by a Republican majority, that found, "a half

a million illegal immigrants received \$750 million in healthcare subsidies."

Well, I have that report right here in my hand, and nowhere does it say that 500,000 undocumented immigrants received millions of dollars in healthcare subsidies, as Mr. BARLETTA's press release claims. What the report says is 500,000 individuals, and not 500,000 undocumented individuals or any other term that Republicans like to use to disparage immigrants.

□ 1345

There is no evidence to suggest that immigrants without authorization to be here would take the risk of signing on to a government website to fraudulently get healthcare coverage.

So what are the unintended consequences of this bill?

I hate to break it to my colleagues, but the people most impacted are U.S. citizens who were born abroad or naturalized, not undocumented individuals.

This bill is yet another example that the Republican majority will do anything to demonize even the smallest subsection of immigrants in order to gut healthcare for Americans and get their billionaire buddies a big, fat tax break. Whether that means sowing fear in communities by raiding homes in order to hunt people down or denying access to care for legal immigrants who are entitled to care, no excuse is too ridiculous for Republicans to attack the immigrant community.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter signed by 226 organizations in opposition to H.R. 2581.

JUNE 12, 2017.

DEAR MEMBER OF CONGRESS: As national, state, and local organizations concerned about immigrant rights or access to affordable health care, we are writing to strongly urge you to VOTE NO on HR 2581, the "Verify First" Act. This bill is an attack on people's ability to see a doctor and on immigrants and people of color. It is not the "common sense" taxpayer protection bill that its supporters would have you believe.

HR 2581 is a dangerous bill that puts up roadblocks for both citizens and immigrants to obtain timely, affordable health insurance. It would strip away provisions that provide for a person to obtain subsidies for enrollment in an Affordable Care Act (or the contemplated American Health Care Act) plan while they work with Department of Health and Human Services to verify their U.S. citizenship or immigration status. The people most impacted are U.S. citizens who were born abroad or naturalized. The bill also affects many immigrants, especially those newly arrived or certain victims of domestic violence and trafficking survivors.

The fact is that when individuals are not able to immediately verify their citizenship or immigration status on an Affordable Care Act Marketplace, it begins an often months long, strenuous process of sending in documents that must be physically inspected. Health care assistants routinely say these clients are the hardest cases they work on because the process for verifying citizenship and immigration status is a time-consuming exercise in dealing with inefficient government processes.

Rather than protect American taxpayers, HR 2581 would strip from American taxpayers important protections that are need-

ed to overcome deficiencies in federal government databases. Immigrants who are not lawfully present are categorically barred from enrollment in health insurance on the Affordable Care Act marketplaces, and for the subsidies that make that insurance affordable. Moreover, safeguards protecting taxpayers are already built into the ACA; individuals whose citizenship or immigration status cannot be verified already are required to pay back all of their subsidies when they file their taxes and "reconcile" their premium tax credits.

Supporters of this bill cite a sloppy Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee report that arrived at a made-up number of supposed "fraud." It's just not true. The committee assumed that every person who lost coverage for failure to verify their citizenship and immigration status was undocumented. In the experience of our organizations and organizations we work with, this is false. These reports describe the first year of the marketplaces, and it is well documented that system outages and understaffing, among other technical problems, contributed to the federal Marketplace's failure to verify consumers' status promptly. The Department of Health and Human Services Inspector General reported in 2014 that a cause of the delay in verification was the agency's lack of prioritization of this issue.

Despite huge gains since then, problems still persist. The Social Security database holding many citizens' information may not reflect common changes, such as when a person marries and changes their last name, or when someone naturalizes and gains U.S. citizenship. People lose their coverage because they receive notices in languages they cannot read. Immigrants are required to submit documents multiple times, or wait while the Department of Homeland Security finds paper files, a result of deficiencies in their databases affecting groups like asylum applicants and some survivors of domestic violence. These are among the many issues consumers face.

Congress has already deprived undocumented immigrants from the ability to buy coverage, even at full price, so they can see a doctor when they are sick, but this bill would go a step further to delay or put out of reach affordable health insurance for many citizens and lawfully present immigrants. Our organizations firmly believe that this would be detrimental to the people we represent and to all of our communities as a whole. We have seen that when health insurance is unaffordable, people are effectively prevented from obtaining access to the care they need to be healthy.

This bill is not just an attack on our health care system, it is also an attack on immigrants and people of color, which our organizations stand firmly against. In his statements when introducing this bill, Rep. Lou Barletta focused the bill as part of his effort to "stop illegal immigration." Rep. Barletta has a long history of anti-immigrant rhetoric, from trying to prevent immigrants from leasing a residence to stating that they should be denied life-saving services in hospital emergency rooms. This bill is simply a vehicle for scapegoating immigrants and people of color and will keep eligible people from accessing health care.

We the undersigned organizations urge you to vote NO on HR 2581 and the continued assault on immigrants and the health of our communities.

Sincerely,

NATIONAL

Advocates for Youth; African American Ministers In Action; American Federation of Teachers (AFT); American Friends Service

Committee; American Intercession; American Society on Aging; Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum; Asian Americans Advancing Justice/AAJC; Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence; Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy & Leadership (APPEAL); Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO); Autistic Self Advocacy Network; Black Alliance for Just Immigration; Breast Cancer Action; Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP); Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.; Child Welfare League of America; Children's Advocacy Institute; Children's Defense Fund; Church World Service (CWS);

Coalition on Human Needs; Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach; Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces; Conscious Talk Radio; Detention Watch Network; Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund; Dominican Sisters; Dominicans of Sinsinawa; Family Equality Council; Farmworker Justice; First Focus Campaign for Children; Food Research & Action Center; Franciscan Sisters of the Poor IJPC; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Generations Inc.; GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality; Immigrant Legal Resource Center; Indivisible; Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas; Interfaith Worker Justice;

Irish Apostolate USA; Jobs With Justice; Justice in Aging; Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province; Lambda Legal; Leadership Team of the Felician Sisters of North America; League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); Medical Mission Sisters; Mi Familia Vota; MomsRising; NAACP; NAPAFAASA; National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum; National Association of County and City Health Officials; National Association of Social Workers; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Transgender Equality; National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA); National Council of Churches;

National Council of La Raza (NCLR); National Education Association; National Employment Law Project; National Health Law Program; National Hispanic Medical Association; National Immigrant Justice Center; National Immigration Law Center; National Justice for Our Neighbors; National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health; National Network of Abortion Funds; National Organization for Women; National Women's Health Network; Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ; NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice; NMAC; OCA—Asian Pacific American Advocates; Our Revolution; Peace and Justice Office of the Congregation of Notre Dame; Physicians for Reproductive Health; PICO National;

Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign; Prevention Institute; Project Inform; Racine Dominicans; Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need; Refuge Ministries; Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law; Service Employees International Union; Sisters of Charity; Sisters of Charity of Nazareth; Sisters of Mercy of the Americas—Institute Justice Team; Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC); The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights; United Sikhs; United We Dream; Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, U.S. Province; We Belong Together; API Wellness;

STATE AND LOCAL

Academy of Medical & Public Health Services; Advocates for Children and Youth; AgeOptions; Almost Home, Inc.; Anti-Hunger

& Nutrition Coalition; Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families; Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing; Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Los Angeles; Asian Community Alliance—Cincinnati OH; Asian Law Alliance; Asian Services In Action, Inc.; Baltimore Jewish Council; California Health Professional Student Alliance; California Immigrant Policy Center; California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ); California OneCare; California Pan-Ethnic Health Network; California Partnership; California Physicians Alliance; CASA;

Center for Southeast Asians; Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition; Child Care Resources of Rockland; Children Now; Children's Defense Fund-CA; Chinatown Service Center; Chinese-American Planning Council; Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA); Collaborative Center for Justice; Colorado Center on Law and Policy; Colorado Center on Law and Policy; Columbia Legal Services; Community Health Councils; D. C. Hunger Solutions; DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform; Empower Missouri; Ensuring Opportunity Campaign to End Poverty in Contra Costa; Erie Benedictines for Peace; Esperanza Health Centers; EverThrive Illinois; Farmworker Association of Florida;

Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC); Give for a Smile; Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness; Having Our Say Coalition; Health Access California; Health Care for All-WA; Health Law Advocates; Healthy House Within A MATCH Coalition; Hmong Ohio of Tomorrow; Hunger Action Los Angeles; IHM Sisters, Immaculata, PA; IL Hunger Coalition; Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights; Indivisible Mountain Home, Idaho; Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity; IRIS—Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services; Islamic Civic Engagement Project; Jewish Family & Children's Service; Kansas Appleseed; Kentucky Equal Justice Center; Korean Community Services of Metropolitan NY; La Fe Policy Research and Education Center;

La Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program; Legal Council for Health Justice; Legal Services of Southern Piedmont; Maine Consumers for Affordable Health Care; Make the Road New York; Maryland CASH Campaign; Maryland Hunger Solutions; Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA); Massachusetts Law Reform Institute; Maternal and Child Health Access; Maternity Care Coalition; National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter; National Tongan American Society; Nationalities Service Center; NC Child; New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty; New York Immigration Coalition; New York Legal Assistance Group; NICOS Chinese Health Coalition; NJ State Industrial Union Council; NOELA Community Health Center; Northern NJ Chapter, National Organization for Women;

Northwest Health Law Advocates; Northwest Immigrant Rights Project; Office of the Health Care Advocate at Vermont Legal Aid; OneAmerica; Pacific Islander Health Partnership; Pitkin County Human Services; Public Justice Center; Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA); Rainbow Center; Reformed Church of Highland Park; RESULTS-Santa Fe (NM); Salaam Cleveland; Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN); Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Houston; Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, NY; Sisters of the Most Precious Blood; Social Justice Committee St. Patrick Church; South Asian Network; Southwest Women's Law Center; St. Francis St Vincent de Paul Society; Tennessee Justice Center; Thai Health And Information Service;

The Children's Partnership; The Latino Health Insurance Program, Inc.; Turning

Points; United Way Bay Area; URI Feinstein Center for a Hunger Free America; Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition; Virginia Poverty Law Center; Voices for Vermont's Children; Voz Hispana Cambio Comunitario; Washington Community Action Network; Washington Healthcare Access Alliance; Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; West Chester Food Cupboard; West Side Campaign Against Hunger; Westlake Chinese Culture Association; Wisconsin Council of Churches; Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice; Women's Action Movement Washtenaw County MI; Worksite Wellness LA; Xaverian Brothers; Young Women United;

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA), the author of the Verify First Act, and as chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, I am proud to advance this bill.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and working with me on this important issue. I also thank leadership for recognizing this issue and working with me to fix the problem.

I am proud to rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act.

My bill is intended to stop fraud in the distribution of healthcare tax credits and protect taxpayer dollars. It is simple: the American people expect that we are verifying that someone qualifies for taxpayer money before that money goes out the door.

This is about the Federal Government being good stewards of the money our constituents send to Washington. Every Federal dollar that goes to someone committing fraud is a dollar that is not going to a person who truly needs and deserves assistance.

No one should be allowed to commit fraud at the taxpayers' expense. No business would give a refund without first verifying a receipt.

Yet this is exactly what is happening under our current healthcare system. The law claims that taxpayer money will only go to people who qualify for it. Yet no one is being held responsible for making sure that that happens. My bill does that.

Under current law, the Federal Government pays tax credits to individuals without first verifying that they qualify to receive them. If individuals cannot verify their legal status, the IRS is then forced to chase after the money.

This pay-and-chase model of distributing tax credits has greatly increased costs to the taxpayers. A 2016 Senate report revealed that, under ObamaCare, \$750 million in taxpayer-funded healthcare subsidies went to people who did not qualify for those benefits.

We could fix this problem and save time and money so that IRS agents are helping people, instead of trying to recover improper payments by verifying legal status first.

My bill simply requires the IRS to work with the relevant Federal agencies to verify that an individual is a

citizen, national, or lawfully present in the United States before tax credits go out the door. This can be done by verifying an applicant's Social Security number or other immigration documents. Again, the American people expect that we are already doing this.

Under my bill, everyone who applies for the advance premium tax credit will be verified for legal status. Most people won't even know that this is happening because the verification check is so quick.

My bill also includes protections that ensure that individuals who are legally entitled to these tax credits are not penalized if there is a delay in verifying their documents. I first raised this issue last year with the previous administration. I am raising it again this year because there is no evidence that anything has been done to address it.

Nobody wanted to take responsibility for mismanaging \$750 million of taxpayer money. Everyone pointed fingers at other people. My bill holds people accountable.

While I received assurances from the current administration that it would implement and follow a process to verify legal status, my bill would require it in law. This issue is too important to be left to the changing positions of unelected Federal bureaucrats. The American people deserve to know that their representatives are doing everything in their power to protect taxpayer money.

The Verify First Act provides that certainty and upholds the integrity of the health insurance premium tax credit by putting an end to fraud and abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the cosponsors of my bill for their support. They include DIANE BLACK, MO BROOKS, JEFF DUNCAN, JIMMY DUNCAN, MIKE KELLY, DOUG LAMBORN, MIKE McCAUL, DAVID MCKINLEY, KRISTI NOEM, JIM RENACCI, MIKE ROGERS, LAMAR SMITH, JASON SMITH, G.T. THOMPSON, and JOE WILSON.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD letters of support from NumbersUSA and FAIR, two groups that have been working with me to protect the interests of the American worker and legal immigrants.

NUMBERSUSA,
Arlington, VA, May 23, 2017.

Hon. LOU BARLETTA,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN BARLETTA: NumbersUSA, on behalf of our more than 8 million activists, applauds you for introducing the Verify First Act to ensure that health care tax credits are not paid to illegal aliens or other disqualified aliens. As you know, NumbersUSA opposed the ineffective verification provisions in the Affordable Care Act because we knew they would result in taxpayer-funded subsidies being sent to illegal aliens. Our concerns, unfortunately, were confirmed by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, which reported that more than \$700 million in Obamacare subsidies had been paid to ineligible aliens by 2015. Like you, we recognized that these same ineffective

verification procedures in the American Health Care Act (AHCA) would result in the payment of health care tax credits to illegal or otherwise ineligible aliens.

The Verify First Act will require the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to actually verify the citizenship or immigration status of every applicant for a credit under the AHCA before the Treasury Department issues the credit. Both SSA and DHS have established, proven methods of verifying status in a timely and efficient manner, including the E-Verify system, which relies on data from these two agencies to verify work authorization, and the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) system, which uses DHS data to establish welfare eligibility.

Hard-working Americans and legal residents already are struggling to pay for their own health care. There is simply no excuse for the Federal government to force them to subsidize health care for illegal aliens through taxpayer-funded credits.

For this reason, NumbersUSA is delighted to support your Verify First Act and we look forward to working with you to make sure it is enacted into law. We also applaud House Republican Leadership and the House Ways and Means Committee for working with you to close this expensive loophole in our health care system.

Sincerely,

ANNE MANETAS,
Vice President, NumbersUSA.

FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN
IMMIGRATION REFORM,
Washington, DC, May 24, 2017.

Hon. LOU BARLETTA,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN BARLETTA: On behalf of the Federation for American Immigration Reform's (FAIR) nearly 1.5 million members and supporters nationwide, I am writing to thank you for introducing the Verify First Act. This important piece of legislation would deny health care tax credits to illegal aliens and ensure that Americans' hard-earned tax dollars only go to those with a valid Social Security number (SSN).

As you know, federal law explicitly prevents illegal aliens from receiving tax credits. Despite this, a recent report by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee found that nearly 500,000 illegal aliens received approximately \$750 million in taxpayer-funded health care subsidies as of June 2015. Under Obamacare, the federal government pays health care tax credits on a "temporary basis" to individuals who are unable to verify their citizenship. If an individual is ultimately unable to verify their immigration status, the funding is suspended and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) attempts to recoup overpayments from the individuals who were wrongly covered. This challenging practice—known as "pay and chase"—is costing taxpayers millions.

As a complement to the recently passed American Health Care Act, your legislation ensures that the IRS has verified that an individual is a citizen, national, or lawfully present in the United States before the advance health insurance premium tax credit is disbursed. This will be done by checking an applicant's SSN or other immigration documents. Additionally, your legislation prohibits the use of the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), which are issued without verification of legal status.

For the aforementioned reasons, FAIR applauds you for introducing the Verify First Act. When this important piece of legislation

is considered on the House floor, FAIR will include the vote in our voting report.

Sincerely,

DAN STEIN,
President.

Mr. BARLETTA. Additionally, this legislation is supported by Citizens Against Government Waste and Americans for Tax Reform.

Finally, I include in the RECORD a Statement of Administration Policy noting that the President would sign this bill into law.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 2581—VERIFY FIRST ACT—REP. BARLETTA,
R-PA AND 14 COSPONSORS

The Administration supports H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act. Under Obamacare, millions of dollars in advance payments of the premium tax credit may have been paid on behalf of individuals who were likely ineligible beneficiaries, including illegal immigrants. By eliminating the practice of providing advance payments while an applicant's immigration status is being verified, this bill stems the flow of payments to ineligible individuals under Obamacare and strengthens the ability of the Administration to ensure premium tax credits will be appropriately provided to eligible individuals under the American Health Care Act of 2017 (AHCA). By protecting the integrity of Federal funds, this bill furthers the President's vision of a more efficient Federal Government that respects taxpayer dollars.

H.R. 2581 would prohibit advance payments of premium tax credits to individuals under current law and the AHCA, unless the Secretary of the Treasury receives confirmation that the individual is a citizen or a national of the United States, or is lawfully present in the United States. H.R. 2581 would also strengthen the AHCA, as passed by the House of Representatives on May 4, 2017, which the Administration continues to support strongly.

If H.R. 2581 were presented to the President in its current form, his advisors would recommend that he sign the bill into law.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge passage of my bill.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the majority that the IRS would be able to do their job if they didn't spend the last 8 years demonizing the IRS and cutting their budget year after year.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), my colleague on the Ways and Means Committee.

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, this act jeopardizes American families' ability to afford health insurance.

The so-called Verify First Act would require a new verification process of an individual's Social Security number before he or she can receive any tax credit for health coverage, either under the ACA or under the disastrous House-passed TrumpCare bill.

This bill does nothing to address the reality that more than 23 million Americans would lose health insurance under the Republican healthcare legislation; nor does it address the harm caused by cutting \$800 billion from Medicaid by eliminating the expansion

for moderate-income workers and by imposing per capita caps on program spending; and it does nothing to address higher premiums for older workers and discrimination against Americans with preexisting conditions that will occur under the TrumpCare bill that this legislation is amending.

Instead, this bill takes that one step further by making it harder for children, including newborns and survivors of domestic violence and sex trafficking, to obtain a tax credit for purchasing their own health coverage. Under the legislation, Social Security numbers would be required before receiving a tax credit, and it prohibits the use of an individual taxpayer identification number, which those without a Social Security number use to file their tax returns.

Mr. Speaker, as has already been said, there are already protections built into the law to ensure that tax credits are issued to qualifying individuals. Under current law, eligibility for tax credits is verified when an individual applies to enroll in coverage. The eligibility is then subject to a secondary verification process that identifies ineligible individuals and terminates their coverage. This system strikes a balance between rigorously verifying eligibility, while also ensuring that eligible individuals are not subject to financial hardship because of red tape.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would make it more difficult for American families to access affordable healthcare. I oppose this bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KELLY), a key member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I have a chart that I am going to put up here in a minute, but there is something that I think we all need to realize: Our positions here not only are as representatives but also stewards of taxpayer money.

Now, a lot of people sometimes become confused as to whose money it is that we are talking about, and what we are talking about is hardworking American taxpayers.

The definition of a steward is pretty simple: It is someone who manages another's property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another or others.

The oath we take makes us responsible for every single penny that we spend or allocate because it came out of the pocket of a hardworking American taxpayer.

So it just seems to me that Mr. BARLETTA's idea makes sense: this idea that somehow actually making sure that people qualify for a subsidy is somehow being mean-hearted and not being actually a steward of these dollars.

I just wanted to point this out. This is H.R. 3590, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. It was the final

vote on March 21, 2010. And I would just tell some of my colleagues: Take a look because some of your names are very prominent there—and you can see it. The piece that we are talking about is the piece that was included in the Affordable Care Act. This isn't something that we dreamed up overnight; this is something that was actually part of the Affordable Care Act.

And now we are saying: My goodness, we are allowing these subsidies to be out there. And then what we are saying is: Well, we are going to presume that whoever it is who applied for these subsidies actually is entitled to them.

Now, that only works in Washington, D.C. In the private sector, you usually have to verify before you do anything, as opposed to saying: Well, do you know what, somebody said that they were entitled to this, so we ought to just go ahead and pass this on.

I have got to tell you: It is a lot easier when it doesn't come out of your pocket. But, when it comes out of hardworking American taxpayers' pockets, I think it is incumbent upon us, as elected representatives, to say that there is something that doesn't make sense here.

When over half a million people receive over \$750 million in subsidies, somebody, somewhere, should be saying: How did this happen?

I think it is interesting that neither HHS or the IRS has any method in place to actually go out and recoup these dollars that were wrongfully awarded. This just doesn't make sense. Mr. BARLETTA is doing something that is common sense.

And I know that when the act was passed, the most famous quote of all is: We have to pass it to find out what is in it.

Well, we did pass it. I wasn't here. I was in the private sector. But these are all of the folks who passed it. This is actually your policy. This is LOU BARLETTA's policy. This isn't a Republican policy. This is a policy that was part of the Affordable Care Act.

Why in the world would we ever, as taxpayers, expect people to verify this type of activity?

We should just say: Listen, they seem like pretty good folks, and they are going to eventually get back to us.

We have no way of recouping this money.

Now, we can rail about people not having hearts; we can rail about people who don't like immigrants; and we can rail about taking this out on hardworking families and making it difficult for them to get by.

I would just say this: We are trying to protect taxpayer money. We are trying to protect something that is so basic. We are trying to protect something that is actually part of the law that was passed as part of the Affordable Care Act. This isn't a foreign idea. This just makes sense.

So I would just ask my friends: Listen, please go to H.R. 3590, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act,

and go to section 1411—this is your language, by the way. As I said, I wasn't here at the time. I did read it, and I am still scratching my head to say: Do you know what, this is probably a good policy; you should probably read it before you pass it.

But it says exactly what it is that you expect people receiving these subsidies to go through.

It is amazing me today that, all of a sudden, this is Potomac amnesia: I don't remember that part of the law.

So, look, there could be nothing more sensible—commonsensical—than making sure that before we issue subsidies, that are funded by hardworking American taxpayers, that we actually verify who it is that is getting them; rather than going ahead and putting it out there and then saying: Do you know what, maybe they don't qualify.

Well, how do you get the money back?

This pay-and-chase idea, to me, would never work in the private sector because we actually have to be responsible for what we do.

Now, I don't want you to get all wrapped around the axle and think that somehow we are coming after people in a way that doesn't make sense.

Here is what I want you to think about: I want you to think about the people who actually pay the tab, the people who actually pick up the check, the people who actually pay taxes, the people to who we are the most responsible.

And to somehow come up with an idea that it is mean-hearted to verify who is getting these subsidies, to me, is tomfoolery. If you want to do something, and you want to make it hard for people to understand what we are doing, do this: I would love to go back home and tell people what you folks just don't understand. You sent the money to us, we decided how we are going to spend it, we decided that we can give it to anybody we want, and, by the way, if they don't qualify, that shouldn't bother you.

Now, let's just do something that makes sense.

□ 1400

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Well, you know what? I really don't need a full minute to talk about something that is common sense, but I have been here now a little bit over 6 years, and it is hard for me to believe that this act was passed back on March 21, 2010, and the language we are talking about today is the actual language that was in the bill that we had to pass before we could find out what was in it.

Maybe at that time somebody should have read this, and it was a good idea to actually verify these things. That would have saved a whole lot of time, a whole lot of money, and a whole lot of irresponsible spending.

Again, whether you want to agree with the study or not agree with the study, when half a million people receive over \$750 million in hardworking American taxpayer money, and then we are told: Geez, I can't believe you are that mean that you want to go back and recoup money from people who didn't deserve it—no. What we are saying is let's verify first. Let's make sure of every single penny that goes out of this House—the people's House, by the way—and let's do what is the responsible thing to do as stewards of every single taxpayer penny.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I would just remind my colleagues that under the ACA, there is also a verification process for subsidies. But I would just raise the issue that for newborn children, most of whom don't have a Social Security number when they are newborn—and this includes children of our military members serving overseas—if they have a severe health problem, then delaying verification, which can be up to 6 weeks for them, can mean the difference between life and death. And I am talking about a situation such as that experienced by Jimmy Kimmel, if you take the time to see his response to what happened with his newborn.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT), also a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, this so-called American Health Care bill is a real Titanic of a sorry piece of legislation: It would sink 23 million Americans losing their health coverage; millions more who have a preexisting condition would face great barriers; it would undermine Medicare; it would provide price-gouging, Big Pharma manufacturers with a huge tax windfall, all as part of almost a trillion dollars in a tax cut—which is what their bill is really all about, not healthcare—those benefits going to a few corporations and the superrich among us.

Most every healthcare professional group in the country along with the AARP and the vast majority of Americans reject this bill. We would have even more people rejecting if it hadn't been hidden, if even one administration official had had the courage to come and be held accountable for this bill in a public hearing. But, apparently, we will not have that anywhere in this Congress before this huge bill is approved.

The American people are locked on board this sinking ship. Our insurance markets are already taking on water from Trump sabotage, and disaster looms in front of us.

This is not a Verify First bill that we take up today; it is a patch on this sinking Titanic ship.

It is not a Verify First; it is a "Vilify First" our immigrants, and it is really just the next chapter in Trump's anti-immigrant crusade, which he tweets about on a regular basis.

Our Republican colleagues celebrate this Immigrant Heritage Month, June. They celebrate the fourth anniversary of 68 Members of the United States Senate, in a bipartisan way, approving comprehensive immigration reform. They do it with this "Vilify First Act."

And while I want to protect taxpayers and think we have a responsibility to ferret out and prevent every dime of fraud that might be out there, I also feel a responsibility to struggling families that I represent who already have so many barriers in the way of getting medical coverage to their children.

Not everyone is as fortunate as Jimmy Kimmel, although he had the misfortune of a child born with serious medical needs, he at least had the ability to do something about it. And folks need to be able to access promptly and immediately, sometimes, a family doctor.

We should fight fraud wherever it occurs. I do wish we had the same level of enthusiasm about protecting taxpayers from Medicaid fraud by big pharmaceutical manufacturers, for offshore tax dodging that denies us billions of dollars, as they voice for taking on the poor. We don't have that, but we do need to analyze carefully what the Government Accountability Office that provides the basis for this legislation really said.

They found a need to address \$750 million. Under the program, they did not find one dollar, one red cent that an immigrant had taken improperly from this program. They did not document any immigrant fraud. There may be some out there, but you can't rely on this study to find it.

We were asked: Well, why do you think this has anything to do with immigrants? Well, I can tell you why. Because the sponsor of the amendment, who is here on the floor, when he introduced this piece of legislation, said he was after what he called illegal immigrants; and he said that he would not vote for TrumpCare, that sorry Titanic of a bill, he would not vote for it unless this provision was adopted.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, I personally represent San Antonio, San Marcus, Lockhart, and Austin families that already face barriers to getting their children medical coverage, and adding an additional requirement just means they are that much less likely, in the event of an emergency, to be able to get coverage. We need to prevent fraud. This is not the way to do it.

What we need is comprehensive immigration reform to deal with these immigration issues just like the Senate approved 4 years ago—make improvements on it; debate it; consider it—sink this sorry piece of legislation, try to raise up the antifraud provisions and the comprehensive immigration reform that we so desperately need, and to grow this economy.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS).

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act. This legislation is part of our continued focus on improving the Nation's healthcare system beyond the passage of the American Health Care Act. The bill ensures those who receive help to purchase health insurance are truly eligible. What is wrong with that?

Under the Obama administration, an estimated \$750 million in tax credits have been awarded to over 500,000 individuals who were later determined to be ineligible. For the sake of hardworking Americans everywhere, we need to be better stewards of taxpayer dollars. That means verify first.

Why not? The Verify First Act protects taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse under ObamaCare and, in the future, under the American Health Care Act. This bill is good for taxpayers and good for America's healthcare future. It is as simple as that.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. JUDY CHU), a colleague from the Ways and Means Committee.

Ms. JUDY CHU of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this misguided bill. This bill will prevent people who have a legitimate right to healthcare from accessing it and will harm them, and it is for reasons that are completely unjustified.

Currently, taxpayers must provide a Social Security number or tax I.D. number in order to qualify for a premium tax credit for healthcare. While the taxpayer's citizenship and immigration status are verified, they are given a 90-day grace period in which to prove their legal status.

This grace period was put into place to ensure that people do not lose critical healthcare coverage and continue to have it while their paperwork is cleared. This bill would remove this safeguard and make it more difficult for numerous people to obtain health insurance. That could be a matter of life or death.

This bill would certainly create barriers for immigrants who are here legally. It would also create barriers for U.S. citizens who have complications with their Social Security numbers. This includes people who recently change their name after marriage, have an error in their records, were born abroad, or were victims of human trafficking. It would also affect newborns, who do not get their Social Security number right away.

Republicans claim that reports released by the GAO and the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee were proof of immigrants defrauding the government, but neither of these reports back up this claim.

First of all, the GAO report was actually a test to identify vulnerabilities

for fraud in the system. They did not find instances of immigrants committing fraud for healthcare subsidies. The Senate report found that 500,000 individuals did not complete their verification process and were, thus, deemed ineligible for subsidies.

The author of today's bill takes this information and leaps to the conclusion that all those who did not complete the process were undocumented immigrants and were attempting to commit fraud, but there is nothing in either report to substantiate this. In fact, the ACA requires undocumented immigrants or anybody who does receive subsidies in error to pay back every cent on their tax return at the end of the year.

This bill seeks to address a problem that does not exist. Instead, it would harm people by denying or delaying health insurance subsidies to people who need them. This is wrong. I urge my colleagues to vote "no."

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MARINO).

Mr. MARINO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act, which was introduced by my colleague, good friend, and fellow Pennsylvanian LOU BARLETTA. This is a simple piece of legislation that ensures no American taxpayer dollars are used to fund healthcare for those who are here undocumented.

Congress, the American people, and my constituents were told that, under ObamaCare, illegal immigrants would not be eligible for tax credits. Instead, the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee issued a report detailing that, as of June 2015, over half a million people without legal status have received up to \$750 million in taxpayer-funded subsidies. No record can be found if any of this was ever recovered.

It is time that we ensure our taxpayers that their dollars are only going to those with legal status. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this legislation.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased at this time to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER), my colleague on the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to share the Chamber with my fellow Northwesterner.

We have gone through this in the Ways and Means Committee with one of the least productive hearings I can remember, and that says a lot in my 10 years on the committee. We do it good natured, but, frankly, it is beside the point. And my friends from the Ways and Means Committee have documented the fact that this is a solution in search of a problem.

The real outrage ought to be what is happening now behind closed doors to take a flawed bill that came from the House, was actually made worse in

order to get the votes for it, and passed through on a narrow party-line vote—actually, a number of Republicans voted against it—lodged in the Senate, no public hearings. In fact, we are told that they are not enabling people to actually get ahold of the documents to know what is going on.

You know, it is stunning to me to have heard some of my Republican friends complain about the process of the Affordable Care Act. I was in the middle of that. We took a year. Three committees in the House had multiple hearings, work sessions. There were actually some Republican amendments adopted out in the open. CBO scored the bill so people knew. Now we are on the verge of, we are told, having that sneak through the Senate without the glare of publicity, without an open public process, which will deny healthcare to millions of people—millions of people—and shred much of the good work that has been done through the Affordable Care Act.

□ 1415

We have been told and we acknowledge there are little things that we could do to fine-tune it, but in 7 years of Republican crow and crow, we have never had an opportunity to do that. Instead, this administration and my Republican friends consistently made it worse, destabilized, sent conflicting signals to the healthcare industry, to the insurance companies. And you don't have to take my word for it. News accounts quote people in the industry about what the Republicans have done to destabilize it and try to make it fail.

There was a reason that virtually everybody in the healthcare space was opposed to the Republican approach. It is not thoughtful. It is not fair. It is not effective. It is not necessary. But today we are looking at some provisions that will make it a little more burdensome.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, there may be some people that will be swept up who had gotten care that they didn't, but there will be people who will be swept up who were entitled to care who could not jump through the hurdles or, at a minimum, had their care delayed. We haven't properly analyzed that. But as I say, it is beside the point.

There are tremendous opportunities for us to work together on a bipartisan agenda that we have in the Ways and Means Committee, of things that we could move forward and agree upon to make healthcare better, that doesn't depend on shredding the guarantees of the ACA; that doesn't depend on gutting Medicaid, which more Americans rely upon for their healthcare than any other program in the country. We wouldn't have to mess with that.

Instead, we are having a sideshow. I don't know that it goes anywhere, but it certainly isn't the issue that Americans could focus on, should focus on, that is going to imperil their healthcare for tens of millions of Americans if the Republicans have their way.

That is exactly why we are debating this today, to deflect attention, occupy time, and prevent doing the job that we should have done right here, and allow the Senate to be able to continue this unfortunate process.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RENACCI), a colleague of mine on the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. RENACCI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act, introduced by my good friend and colleague, Congressman LOU BARLETTA. This legislation seeks to remedy one of the many oversights of the ACA that it failed to address—an oversight at the expense of the American taxpayer.

Under the current system, the Treasury disburses credits to individuals before their application has been verified. In the real world, where I come from, that just doesn't happen. If the IRS then finds out that this individual is not eligible, they have to try to get the money back. It is almost impossible to recover that money.

This legislation closes a loophole simply by requiring an individual be verified as lawfully present before the Treasury releases the money. It is important to understand that the issue at hand is about poor stewardship of hard-earned tax dollars. That is what the American people sent us down here for. The sole intent of this credit was for the credits to be used lawfully, and this legislation helps ensure just that.

At a time when our national debt is \$19 trillion and counting, it makes no sense for the Federal Government to continue to write these checks. My constituents in Ohio depend on me to ensure responsible stewardship of their hard-earned tax dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to commit to the same responsibility and support the Verify First Act.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle are calling this bill and the two other healthcare bills on the floor this week "fixes" for TrumpCare. But what exactly is it that you are fixing?

This bill does nothing to address the more than 23 million individuals who will lose their coverage or the \$800 billion cut to Medicaid under TrumpCare. Nothing in this bill will do anything to fix the waiver allowing insurers to discriminate against individuals with pre-existing conditions by jacking up their rates, and nothing in this bill will do anything to roll back the massive tax cut that they are handing out to the top 400 households in America.

Instead of addressing the real issues with our healthcare system, you bring

a racist bill to the floor that you use to buy a vote, literally, for your TrumpCare bill.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the rules of the House are very clear about imputing the character of lawmakers, and I would warn the gentleman, she is treading on the rules.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman attempting to raise a parliamentary inquiry?

Mr. BRADY of Texas. I am considering.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has the time.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. I will monitor the remainder of the remarks.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I was addressing a racist piece of legislation that was used to buy a vote for the TrumpCare bill. But the problem is that this bill doesn't do anything that it says it does. It is based on a blatantly partisan Senate report that doesn't even say what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle claim that it says.

It is baffling how many of my Republican colleagues believe that this report that they keep citing actually said anything about undocumented immigrants. Did you "read" this report in the same way that you "read" the AHCA and all of its amendments?

If you actually read the report, you would know that it does not state that these individuals were undocumented immigrants, but only that they did not complete the verification process. The hurdles might have been too big, it might have taken too much time or too much effort, and they dropped out of the verification process without completing it.

The report also doesn't say that hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants enrolled and received premium credits. The report states that "as of September 30, 2015, CMS awarded approximately \$750 million in advance premium tax credits to individuals enrolled through healthcare.gov who CMS later determined to be ineligible."

It is funny that the daughter of Mexican American immigrants is able to read and understand the distinctions made in this report better than some of my native-born colleagues can.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by begging my Republican colleagues to prove to me that this bill isn't about shutting out immigrants from access to care: legal immigrants or children of those born overseas to our military or newborn children or victims of domestic violence or victims of human trafficking.

Prove to me that you care about the health and wellbeing of all Americans, regardless of the color of their skin or their economic circumstances.

I am actually in agreement with you that ineligible individuals should not see a single penny of the subsidies provided by both the ACA and the AHCA, but there are protections already in

place where only citizens and people lawfully present in the United States can enroll in marketplace coverage and get subsidies to help them pay their premiums and cost-sharing charges.

This bill doesn't fix anything. It just seeks to further demonize immigrants as criminals and people with my last name out of the healthcare system.

Instead of wasting our time on a bill that is in search of a problem to solve, a problem that doesn't even exist, let's work together to make sure that other Americans are not caught up in the unintended consequences of this bill and aren't denied coverage when they are actually eligible for those subsidies and that coverage.

Let's actually work on a better way for the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let's make sure we fact-check some things here. Nothing in this bill changes the eligibility of the Affordable Care Act and who is eligible for it. In fact, the Republican healthcare bill that passed the House, according to the American Action Network, there will be roughly 5.3 million more Americans that will be eligible for help for their healthcare under the Republican plan than under the Affordable Care Act.

Let's fact-check a couple of other issues. We are told that this has all come about because the IRS has not funded properly, but I would remind our Democrat colleagues that the majority of our Democrat colleagues supported the spending levels, which President Obama signed into law regarding the Internal Revenue Service.

Secondly, they have raised the issue that there are no Social Security numbers available. But in truth, nearly 96 percent of children born in America receive their Social Security numbers within 2 weeks. There is an expedited process going forward to achieve the others as well.

We are told, listening today: there is no fraud in ObamaCare; there is no need for this bill by Mr. BARLETTA.

But I remind our colleagues that twice the Government Accountability Office looked at eligibility within the Affordable Care Act. In 2014, they used fake identities to see if they could obtain ObamaCare coverage on the exchange, and in 11 out of 12 applications—some with no data at all—the GAO was granted subsidies for people who don't even exist.

So you say: Well, that is 2014. Certainly, things got better.

Well, last year, they ran it again in the special enrollment period, and in this test, the GAO was able to obtain coverage for imaginary people in 9 out of 12 cases.

We are told today that our taxpayer dollars aren't being wasted. Well, the American public knows better, and they know this because we have

worked for 7 years to oppose what we knew would be a failing law. We held more than 200 congressional hearings. We had 65-plus hours of open debate on the American Health Care Act, and 37 bills passed the House that were ultimately, in one form or another, included in the Republican bill.

The bottom line is this, Mr. Speaker: Our Democrat friends are in denial. ObamaCare is collapsing. Prices have more than doubled. They haven't gone down. They have more than doubled for most Americans; in some States more than tripled, and those rates aren't going down. They are skyrocketing. People aren't getting more choices of healthcare plans. They are disappearing.

Texas has seen nine insurers abandon our State—I think more than any other State—and it is getting fewer and fewer. It is occurring across the country.

You are not able to see more local doctors and go to more local hospitals; just the opposite. It is fewer, and that is hurting everyone in America. ObamaCare is a sinking ship, and it is taking some very good Americans down with it.

The question is: Do we begin to give people a lifeline to truly affordable care?

With this bill, Mr. BARLETTA insists in a commonsense way that your tax dollars go to those we are trying to help: those who can't get healthcare at work; those who don't get it through government programs like Medicare or the VA; those small-business people; those folks coming out of college; those entrepreneurs who are at home starting a new business or raising their families; even those early retirees. Those are the people we are trying to help, and every dollar counts.

Mr. BARLETTA's bill, which I am proud as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee to bring to you, makes a commonsense requirement: that you be verified to get those subsidies before you receive them; to make sure those precious dollars actually go to the Americans we are trying to help.

I strongly support the Verify First Act. If you stand for stopping waste, and fraud, and abuse in protection of your tax dollars, I would urge your support for this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2581, the Verify First Act, which will put important safeguards in place to ensure that federal tax dollars are not fraudulently used to pay for illegal immigrants to enroll in Obamacare.

Right now, the federal government provides Obamacare premium tax credits to individuals before fully making sure that these individuals rightfully qualify for these benefits.

For example, the federal government has wrongfully issued hundreds of millions of dollars in tax credits to individuals without first verifying their immigration status. After the money goes out the door, the Internal Revenue Service must attempt to track down these individuals to recoup the money.

Last year the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs reported that more than \$750 million in taxpayer dollars went to 500,000 people who did not meet the qualifications for those benefits.

H.R. 2581 addresses this issue by requiring that the Social Security Administration, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services to certify that an individual is a citizen, national, or legal immigrant before they receive a health care tax credit.

Given that our nation is nearly \$20 trillion in debt, we cannot afford to hand out hundreds of millions of dollars in Obamacare tax credits to individuals who do not qualify.

This bill is a common-sense measure that puts the interests of hardworking taxpayers first and ensures that health care dollars will be directed only at those who are eligible.

I hope that the Senate will soon take up and pass this commonsense bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 378, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

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

□ 1430

MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentlewoman opposed to the bill?

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. I am opposed to the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Ms. Sánchez moves to recommit the bill H.R. 2581 to the Committee on Ways and Means with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with the following amendment:

Page 4, line 5, insert after the first period the following: "The preceding sentence shall not apply in the case of a delay in verification of such status of an individual who has not attained the age of 1."

Page 5, line 4, insert after the first period the following: "The preceding sentence shall not apply in the case of a delay in verification of such status of an individual who has not attained the age of 1."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California is recognized for 5 minutes in support of her motion.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, this is the final amendment to the bill, which will not kill the bill.

If adopted, the Verify First Act will proceed to final passage as amended.

The Democratic motion to recommit simply amends the Verify First Act to ensure that our most vulnerable—newborns and infants—do not experience a delay in health coverage.

We know that the citizenship of newborns can't be verified electroni-

cally because they don't have Social Security numbers yet when they are born. In order to verify their child's status, parents have to send a copy of their child's birth certificate, which can take anywhere from 1 to 6 weeks to obtain, depending on the State, and that is the best-case scenario if the parents throw a perfect game in documenting and planning for the arrival of their newborn. Just like any perfect game, a little luck is involved in that.

That luck includes having the Social Security Administration process your child's Social Security number as soon as they receive it, that the Administration doesn't make a mistake in the spelling of your child's name, and that you have the financial resources and education to know exactly what steps you need to take to ensure that your newborn has coverage the moment they come out of your womb.

When most people are anticipating the birth of a child, that is not what they are thinking about. The birth of a child is one of life's most precious moments. The joy you feel when you hold your child for the first time should be the only feeling going through your mind. Filling the paperwork out to ensure that your child is covered shouldn't even be something that you should have to worry about.

But the Verify First Act, as currently drafted, would give you another thing to worry about and add an unnecessary barrier for newborns to receive the care they need. God forbid if your child needs extra care after they are born but doesn't have coverage because your plan is waiting to verify your child's status.

A child's life should not hang in the balance because of paperwork and red tape. For all the claims that Republicans are the pro-life party, they sure know how to make life difficult for a newborn as soon as they are out of the womb. They claim to protect the lives of the unborn and crusade against life-saving institutions such as Planned Parenthood. But where are their morals and love of life after the child is born? It somehow magically disappears, and they will throw every obstacle up to ensure that newborns don't receive the care that they need and that they are entitled to.

Whether it is through the unintended consequences of a poorly drafted bill such as this one, or gutting the program that covers half the births in the U.S., Republicans will do everything to gut access to care or place obstacles in struggling people's paths. That's right, by cutting over \$800 billion out of Medicaid, Republicans are endangering the health and welfare of all newborn children.

Earlier I asked my Republican colleagues to prove to me that they care about the health and well-being of all Americans regardless of the color of their skin or their economic circumstances. Well, I am asking them

now to prove to me that they care about the well-being of newborn children.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote for the Democratic motion to recommit, and let us write a bill that will actually help all U.S. citizens get the coverage that they need and are entitled to.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this isn't about verifying for infants. Ninety-six percent of children receive their Social Security numbers within 2 weeks after they are born in a hospital, and many of them have parents who are eligible for these credits as well, so it is immediate care. Even without all that, they can achieve and receive healthcare immediately as they process the premium support.

In the American Health Care Act that passed the House, there are more than \$1 billion set aside to help further the verification process to make sure that we are providing timely credits—but for those who are eligible. In truth, our friends across the aisle want to detract from the challenge today, which is that ObamaCare is a sinking ship.

Today's bill is about the taxpayers. Congress has to do all in its power to ensure the money taken from hardworking taxpayers is actually used for programs that improve their lives in this country and are not frittered away on fraud and abuse.

That is why this bill is so critical. It doesn't change eligibility. It simply says that we are not going to pay first and chase later, which always is a losing approach for taxpayers. Not a dollar of taxpayer money should go out the door until citizenship or legal status is verified, period.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to defeat the Democrats' motion to recommit and stand on behalf of taxpayers who want those dollars to go to Americans we are truly trying to help for the first time get truly affordable healthcare.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT OF 2017

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 1094.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 378, I call up the bill (S. 1094) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 378, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1094

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017”.

(b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

TITLE I—OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

Sec. 101. Establishment of Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection.

Sec. 102. Protection of whistleblowers in Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 103. Report on methods used to investigate employees of Department of Veterans Affairs.

TITLE II—ACCOUNTABILITY OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES, SUPERVISORS, AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

Sec. 201. Improved authorities of Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve accountability of senior executives.

Sec. 202. Improved authorities of Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve accountability of employees.

Sec. 203. Reduction of benefits for Department of Veterans Affairs employees convicted of certain crimes.

Sec. 204. Authority to recoup bonuses or awards paid to employees of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 205. Authority to recoup relocation expenses paid to or on behalf of employees of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 206. Time period for response to notice of adverse actions against supervisory employees who commit prohibited personnel actions.

Sec. 207. Direct hiring authority for medical center directors and VISN directors.

Sec. 208. Time periods for review of adverse actions with respect to certain employees.

Sec. 209. Improvement of training for supervisors.

Sec. 210. Assessment and report on effect on senior executives at Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 211. Measurement of Department of Veterans Affairs disciplinary process outcomes and effectiveness.

TITLE I—OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

SEC. 101. ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Chapter 3 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 323. Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection

“(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established in the Department an office to be known as the ‘Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection’ (in this section referred to as the ‘Office’).

“(b) **HEAD OF OFFICE.**—(1) The head of the Office shall be responsible for the functions of the Office and shall be appointed by the President pursuant to section 308(a) of this title.

“(2) The head of the Office shall be known as the ‘Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection’.

“(3) The Assistant Secretary shall report directly to the Secretary on all matters relating to the Office.

“(4) Notwithstanding section 308(b) of this title, the Secretary may only assign to the Assistant Secretary responsibilities relating to the functions of the Office set forth in subsection (c).

“(c) **FUNCTIONS.**—(1) The functions of the Office are as follows:

“(A) Advising the Secretary on all matters of the Department relating to accountability, including accountability of employees of the Department, retaliation against whistleblowers, and such matters as the Secretary considers similar and affect public trust in the Department.

“(B) Issuing reports and providing recommendations related to the duties described in subparagraph (A).

“(C) Receiving whistleblower disclosures.

“(D) Referring whistleblower disclosures received under subparagraph (C) for investigation to the Office of the Medical Inspector, the Office of Inspector General, or other investigative entity, as appropriate, if the Assistant Secretary has reason to believe the whistleblower disclosure is evidence of a violation of a provision of law, mismanagement, gross waste of funds, abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

“(E) Receiving and referring disclosures from the Special Counsel for investigation to the Medical Inspector of the Department, the Inspector General of the Department, or such other person with investigatory authority, as the Assistant Secretary considers appropriate.

“(F) Recording, tracking, reviewing, and confirming implementation of recommendations from audits and investigations carried out by the Inspector General of the Department, the Medical Inspector of the Department, the Special Counsel, and the Comptroller General of the United States, including the imposition of disciplinary actions and other corrective actions contained in such recommendations.

“(G) Analyzing data from the Office and the Office of Inspector General telephone hotlines, other whistleblower disclosures, disaggregated by facility and area of health care if appropriate, and relevant audits and investigations to identify trends and issue reports to the Secretary based on analysis conducted under this subparagraph.

“(H) Receiving, reviewing, and investigating allegations of misconduct, retaliation, or poor performance involving—

“(i) an individual in a senior executive position (as defined in section 713(d) of this title) in the Department;

“(ii) an individual employed in a confidential, policy-making, policy-determining, or policy-advocating position in the Department; or

“(iii) a supervisory employee, if the allegation involves retaliation against an employee for making a whistleblower disclosure.

“(I) Making such recommendations to the Secretary for disciplinary action as the Assistant Secretary considers appropriate after substantiating any allegation of misconduct or poor performance pursuant to an investigation carried out as described in subparagraph (F) or (H).

“(2) In carrying out the functions of the Office, the Assistant Secretary shall ensure that the Office maintains a toll-free telephone number and Internet website to receive anonymous whistleblower disclosures.

“(3) In any case in which the Assistant Secretary receives a whistleblower disclosure from an employee of the Department under paragraph (1)(C), the Assistant Secretary may not disclose the identity of the employee without the consent of the employee, except in accordance with the provisions of section 552a of title 5, or as required by any other applicable provision of Federal law.

“(d) **STAFF AND RESOURCES.**—The Secretary shall ensure that the Assistant Secretary has such staff, resources, and access to information as may be necessary to carry out the functions of the Office.

“(e) **RELATION TO OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL.**—The Office shall not be established as an element of the Office of the General Counsel and the Assistant Secretary may not report to the General Counsel.

“(f) **REPORTS.**—(1)(A) Not later than June 30 of each calendar year, beginning with June 30, 2017, the Assistant Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the activities of the Office during the calendar year in which the report is submitted.

“(B) Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include, for the period covered by the report, the following:

“(i) A full and substantive analysis of the activities of the Office, including such statistical information as the Assistant Secretary considers appropriate.

“(ii) Identification of any issues reported to the Secretary under subsection (c)(1)(G), including such data as the Assistant Secretary considers relevant to such issues and any trends the Assistant Secretary may have identified with respect to such issues.

“(iii) Identification of such concerns as the Assistant Secretary may have regarding the size, staffing, and resources of the Office and such recommendations as the Assistant Secretary may have for legislative or administrative action to address such concerns.

“(iv) Such recommendations as the Assistant Secretary may have for legislative or administrative action to improve—

“(I) the process by which concerns are reported to the Office; and

“(II) the protection of whistleblowers within the Department.

“(v) Such other matters as the Assistant Secretary considers appropriate regarding the functions of the Office or other matters relating to the Office.

“(2) If the Secretary receives a recommendation for disciplinary action under subsection (c)(1)(I) and does not take or initiate the recommended disciplinary action

before the date that is 60 days after the date on which the Secretary received the recommendation, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a detailed justification for not taking or initiating such disciplinary action.

“(g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘supervisory employee’ means an employee of the Department who is a supervisor as defined in section 7103(a) of title 5.

“(2) The term ‘whistleblower’ means one who makes a whistleblower disclosure.

“(3) The term ‘whistleblower disclosure’ means any disclosure of information by an employee of the Department or individual applying to become an employee of the Department which the employee or individual reasonably believes evidences—

“(A) a violation of a law, rule, or regulation; or

“(B) gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 308(b) of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(12) The functions set forth in section 323(c) of this title.”.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 3 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“323. Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection.”.

SEC. 102. PROTECTION OF WHISTLEBLOWERS IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by—

(1) striking sections 731, 732, 734, 735, and 736;

(2) by redesignating section 733 as section 731; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new sections:

“§ 732. Protection of whistleblowers as criteria in evaluation of supervisors

“(a) DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF CRITERIA REQUIRED.—The Secretary, in consultation with the Assistant Secretary of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, shall develop criteria that—

“(1) the Secretary shall use as a critical element in any evaluation of the performance of a supervisory employee; and

“(2) promotes the protection of whistleblowers.

“(b) PRINCIPLES FOR PROTECTION OF WHISTLEBLOWERS.—The criteria required by subsection (a) shall include principles for the protection of whistleblowers, such as the degree to which supervisory employees respond constructively when employees of the Department report concerns, take responsible action to resolve such concerns, and foster an environment in which employees of the Department feel comfortable reporting concerns to supervisory employees or to the appropriate authorities.

“(c) SUPERVISORY EMPLOYEE AND WHISTLEBLOWER DEFINED.—In this section, the terms ‘supervisory employee’ and ‘whistleblower’ have the meanings given such terms in section 323 of this title.

“§ 733. Training regarding whistleblower disclosures

“(a) TRAINING.—Not less frequently than once every two years, the Secretary, in coordination with the Whistleblower Protection Ombudsman designated under section 3(d)(1)(C) of the Inspector General Act of 1978

(5 U.S.C. App.), shall provide to each employee of the Department training regarding whistleblower disclosures, including—

“(1) an explanation of each method established by law in which an employee may file a whistleblower disclosure;

“(2) the right of the employee to petition Congress regarding a whistleblower disclosure in accordance with section 7211 of title 5;

“(3) an explanation that the employee may not be prosecuted or reprimanded for disclosing information to Congress, the Inspector General, or another investigatory agency in instances where such disclosure is permitted by law, including under sections 5701, 5705, and 7732 of this title, under section 552a of title 5 (commonly referred to as the Privacy Act), under chapter 93 of title 18, and pursuant to regulations promulgated under section 264(c) of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-191);

“(4) an explanation of the language that is required to be included in all nondisclosure policies, forms, and agreements pursuant to section 115(a)(1) of the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012 (5 U.S.C. 2302 note); and

“(5) the right of contractors to be protected from reprisal for the disclosure of certain information under section 4705 or 4712 of title 41.

“(b) MANNER TRAINING IS PROVIDED.—The Secretary shall ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that training provided under subsection (a) is provided in person.

“(c) CERTIFICATION.—Not less frequently than once every two years, the Secretary shall provide training on merit system protection in a manner that the Special Counsel certifies as being satisfactory.

“(d) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish on the Internet website of the Department, and display prominently at each facility of the Department, the rights of an employee to make a whistleblower disclosure, including the information described in paragraphs (1) through (5) of subsection (a).

“(e) WHISTLEBLOWER DISCLOSURE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ‘whistleblower disclosure’ has the meaning given such term in section 323 of this title.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended—

(1) by striking the items relating to sections 731 through 736; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new items:

“731. Adverse actions against supervisory employees who commit prohibited personnel actions relating to whistleblower complaints.

“732. Protection of whistleblowers as criteria in evaluation of supervisors.

“733. Training regarding whistleblower disclosures.”.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 731 of such title, as redesignated by subsection (a)(2), is amended—

(1) in subsection (c)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by striking subparagraphs (A) and (B) and inserting the following:

“(A) making a whistleblower disclosure to the Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, the Inspector General of the Department, the Special Counsel, or Congress;”; and

(ii) by redesignating subparagraphs (C) through (F) as subparagraphs (B) through (E), respectively; and

(iii) in subparagraph (B), as redesignated by clause (ii), by striking “complaint in accordance with section 732 or with” and inserting “disclosure made to the Assistant

Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection,”; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by striking “through (F)” and inserting “through (E)”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d) WHISTLEBLOWER DISCLOSURE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ‘whistleblower disclosure’ has the meaning given such term in section 323(g) of this title.”.

SEC. 103. REPORT ON METHODS USED TO INVESTIGATE EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate, and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on methods used to investigate employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs and whether such methods are used to retaliate against whistleblowers.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report required by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) An assessment of the use of administrative investigation boards, peer review, searches of medical records, and other methods for investigating employees of the Department.

(2) A determination of whether and to what degree the methods described in paragraph (1) are being used to retaliate against whistleblowers.

(3) Recommendations for legislative or administrative action to implement safeguards to prevent the retaliation described in paragraph (2).

(c) WHISTLEBLOWER DEFINED.—In this section, the term “whistleblower” has the meaning given such term in section 323 of title 38, United States Code, as added by section 101.

TITLE II—ACCOUNTABILITY OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES, SUPERVISORS, AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

SEC. 201. IMPROVED AUTHORITIES OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO IMPROVE ACCOUNTABILITY OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 713 of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“§ 713. Senior executives: removal, demotion, or suspension based on performance or misconduct

“(a) AUTHORITY.—(1) The Secretary may, as provided in this section, reprimand or suspend, involuntarily reassign, demote, or remove a covered individual from a senior executive position at the Department if the Secretary determines that the misconduct or performance of the covered individual warrants such action.

“(2) If the Secretary so removes such an individual, the Secretary may remove the individual from the civil service (as defined in section 2101 of title 5).

“(b) RIGHTS AND PROCEDURES.—(1) A covered individual who is the subject of an action under subsection (a) is entitled to—

“(A) advance notice of the action and a file containing all evidence in support of the proposed action;

“(B) be represented by an attorney or other representative of the covered individual's choice; and

“(C) grieve the action in accordance with an internal grievance process that the Secretary, in consultation with the Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, shall establish for purposes of this subsection.

“(2)(A) The aggregate period for notice, response, and decision on an action under subsection (a) may not exceed 15 business days.

“(B) The period for the response of a covered individual to a notice under paragraph (1)(A) of an action under subsection (a) shall be 7 business days.

“(C) A decision under this paragraph on an action under subsection (a) shall be issued not later than 15 business days after notice of the action is provided to the covered individual under paragraph (1)(A). The decision shall be in writing, and shall include the specific reasons therefor.

“(3) The Secretary shall ensure that the grievance process established under paragraph (1)(C) takes fewer than 21 days.

“(4) A decision under paragraph (2) that is not grieved, and a grievance decision under paragraph (3), shall be final and conclusive.

“(5) A covered individual adversely affected by a decision under paragraph (2) that is not grieved, or by a grievance decision under paragraph (3), may obtain judicial review of such decision.

“(6) In any case in which judicial review is sought under paragraph (5), the court shall review the record and may set aside any Department action found to be—

“(A) arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with a provision of law;

“(B) obtained without procedures required by a provision of law having been followed; or

“(C) unsupported by substantial evidence.

“(C) RELATION TO OTHER PROVISIONS OF LAW.—Section 3592(b)(1) of title 5 and the procedures under section 7543(b) of such title do not apply to an action under subsection (a).

“(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘covered individual’ means—

“(A) a career appointee (as that term is defined in section 3132(a)(4) of title 5); or

“(B) any individual who occupies an administrative or executive position and who was appointed under section 7306(a), section 7401(1), or section 7401(4) of this title.

“(2) The term ‘misconduct’ includes neglect of duty, malfeasance, or failure to accept a directed reassignment or to accompany a position in a transfer of function.

“(3) The term ‘senior executive position’ means—

“(A) with respect to a career appointee (as that term is defined in section 3132(a) of title 5), a Senior Executive Service position (as such term is defined in such section); and

“(B) with respect to a covered individual appointed under section 7306(a) or section 7401(1) of this title, an administrative or executive position.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 7461(c)(1) of such title is amended by inserting “employees in senior executive positions (as defined in section 713(d) of this title) and” before “interns”.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 7 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to section 713 and inserting the following new item:

“713. Senior executives: removal, demotion, or suspension based on performance or misconduct.”.

SEC. 202. IMPROVED AUTHORITIES OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO IMPROVE ACCOUNTABILITY OF EMPLOYEES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 713 the following new section:

“§ 714. Employees: removal, demotion, or suspension based on performance or misconduct

“(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) The Secretary may remove, demote, or suspend a covered individual who is an employee of the Department

if the Secretary determines the performance or misconduct of the covered individual warrants such removal, demotion, or suspension.

“(2) If the Secretary so removes, demotes, or suspends such a covered individual, the Secretary may—

“(A) remove the covered individual from the civil service (as defined in section 2101 of title 5);

“(B) demote the covered individual by means of a reduction in grade for which the covered individual is qualified, that the Secretary determines is appropriate, and that reduces the annual rate of pay of the covered individual; or

“(C) suspend the covered individual.

“(b) PAY OF CERTAIN DEMOTED INDIVIDUALS.—(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any covered individual subject to a demotion under subsection (a)(2) shall, beginning on the date of such demotion, receive the annual rate of pay applicable to such grade.

“(2)(A) A covered individual so demoted may not be placed on administrative leave during the period during which an appeal (if any) under this section is ongoing, and may only receive pay if the covered individual reports for duty or is approved to use accrued unused annual, sick, family medical, military, or court leave.

“(B) If a covered individual so demoted does not report for duty or receive approval to use accrued unused leave, such covered individual shall not receive pay or other benefits pursuant to subsection (d)(5).

“(c) PROCEDURE.—(1)(A) The aggregate period for notice, response, and final decision in a removal, demotion, or suspension under this section may not exceed 15 business days.

“(B) The period for the response of a covered individual to a notice of a proposed removal, demotion, or suspension under this section shall be 7 business days.

“(C) Paragraph (3) of subsection (b) of section 7513 of title 5 shall apply with respect to a removal, demotion, or suspension under this section.

“(D) The procedures in this subsection shall supersede any collective bargaining agreement to the extent that such agreement is inconsistent with such procedures.

“(2) The Secretary shall issue a final decision with respect to a removal, demotion, or suspension under this section not later than 15 business days after the Secretary provides notice, including a file containing all the evidence in support of the proposed action, to the covered individual of the removal, demotion, or suspension. The decision shall be in writing and shall include the specific reasons therefor.

“(3) The procedures under chapter 43 of title 5 shall not apply to a removal, demotion, or suspension under this section.

“(4)(A) Subject to subparagraph (B) and subsection (d), any removal or demotion under this section, and any suspension of more than 14 days under this section, may be appealed to the Merit Systems Protection Board, which shall refer such appeal to an administrative judge pursuant to section 7701(b)(1) of title 5.

“(B) An appeal under subparagraph (A) of a removal, demotion, or suspension may only be made if such appeal is made not later than 10 business days after the date of such removal, demotion, or suspension.

“(d) EXPEDITED REVIEW.—(1) Upon receipt of an appeal under subsection (c)(4)(A), the administrative judge shall expedite any such appeal under section 7701(b)(1) of title 5 and, in any such case, shall issue a final and complete decision not later than 180 days after the date of the appeal.

“(2)(A) Notwithstanding section 7701(c)(1)(B) of title 5, the administrative judge shall uphold the decision of the Sec-

retary to remove, demote, or suspend an employee under subsection (a) if the decision is supported by substantial evidence.

“(B) Notwithstanding title 5 or any other provision of law, if the decision of the Secretary is supported by substantial evidence, the administrative judge shall not mitigate the penalty prescribed by the Secretary.

“(3)(A) The decision of the administrative judge under paragraph (1) may be appealed to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

“(B) Notwithstanding section 7701(c)(1)(B) of title 5, the Merit Systems Protection Board shall uphold the decision of the Secretary to remove, demote, or suspend an employee under subsection (a) if the decision is supported by substantial evidence.

“(C) Notwithstanding title 5 or any other provision of law, if the decision of the Secretary is supported by substantial evidence, the Merit Systems Protection Board shall not mitigate the penalty prescribed by the Secretary.

“(4) In any case in which the administrative judge cannot issue a decision in accordance with the 180-day requirement under paragraph (1), the Merit Systems Protection Board shall, not later than 14 business days after the expiration of the 180-day period, submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that explains the reasons why a decision was not issued in accordance with such requirement.

“(5)(A) A decision of the Merit Systems Protection Board under paragraph (3) may be appealed to the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit pursuant to section 7703 of title 5 or to any court of appeals of competent jurisdiction pursuant to subsection (b)(1)(B) of such section.

“(B) Any decision by such Court shall be in compliance with section 7462(f)(2) of this title.

“(6) The Merit Systems Protection Board may not stay any removal or demotion under this section, except as provided in section 1214(b) of title 5.

“(7) During the period beginning on the date on which a covered individual appeals a removal from the civil service under subsection (c) and ending on the date that the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit issues a final decision on such appeal, such covered individual may not receive any pay, awards, bonuses, incentives, allowances, differentials, student loan repayments, special payments, or benefits related to the employment of the individual by the Department.

“(8) To the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary shall provide to the Merit Systems Protection Board such information and assistance as may be necessary to ensure an appeal under this subsection is expedited.

“(9) If an employee prevails on appeal under this section, the employee shall be entitled to backpay (as provided in section 5596 of title 5).

“(10) If an employee who is subject to a collective bargaining agreement chooses to grieve an action taken under this section through a grievance procedure provided under the collective bargaining agreement, the timelines and procedures set forth in subsection (c) and this subsection shall apply.

“(e) WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION.—(1) In the case of a covered individual seeking corrective action (or on behalf of whom corrective action is sought) from the Office of Special Counsel based on an alleged prohibited personnel practice described in section 2302(b) of title 5, the Secretary may not remove, demote, or suspend such covered individual under subsection (a) without the approval of the Special Counsel under section 1214(f) of title 5.

“(2) In the case of a covered individual who has made a whistleblower disclosure to the Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, the Secretary may not remove, demote, or suspend such covered individual under subsection (a) until—

“(A) in the case in which the Assistant Secretary determines to refer the whistleblower disclosure under section 323(c)(1)(D) of this title to an office or other investigative entity, a final decision with respect to the whistleblower disclosure has been made by such office or other investigative entity; or

“(B) in the case in which the Assistant Secretary determines not to refer the whistleblower disclosure under such section, the Assistant Secretary makes such determination.

“(f) **TERMINATION OF INVESTIGATIONS BY OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL.**—(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Special Counsel (established by section 1211 of title 5) may terminate an investigation of a prohibited personnel practice alleged by an employee or former employee of the Department after the Special Counsel provides to the employee or former employee a written statement of the reasons for the termination of the investigation.

“(2) Such statement may not be admissible as evidence in any judicial or administrative proceeding without the consent of such employee or former employee.

“(g) **VACANCIES.**—In the case of a covered individual who is removed or demoted under subsection (a), to the maximum extent feasible, the Secretary shall fill the vacancy arising as a result of such removal or demotion.

“(h) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘covered individual’ means an individual occupying a position at the Department, but does not include—

“(A) an individual occupying a senior executive position (as defined in section 713(d) of this title);

“(B) an individual appointed pursuant to sections 7306, 7401(1), 7401(4), or 7405 of this title;

“(C) an individual who has not completed a probationary or trial period; or

“(D) a political appointee.

“(2) The term ‘suspend’ means the placing of an employee, for disciplinary reasons, in a temporary status without duties and pay for a period in excess of 14 days.

“(3) The term ‘grade’ has the meaning given such term in section 7511(a) of title 5.

“(4) The term ‘misconduct’ includes neglect of duty, malfeasance, or failure to accept a directed reassignment or to accompany a position in a transfer of function.

“(5) The term ‘political appointee’ means an individual who is—

“(A) employed in a position described under sections 5312 through 5316 of title 5 (relating to the Executive Schedule);

“(B) a limited term appointee, limited emergency appointee, or noncareer appointee in the Senior Executive Service, as defined under paragraphs (5), (6), and (7), respectively, of section 3132(a) of title 5; or

“(C) employed in a position of a confidential or policy-determining character under schedule C of subpart C of part 213 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, or successor regulation.

“(6) The term ‘whistleblower disclosure’ has the meaning given such term in section 323(g) of this title.”.

(b) **CLERICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**—

(1) **CLERICAL.**—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 7 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 713 the following new item:

“714. Employees: removal, demotion, or suspension based on performance or misconduct.”.

(2) **CONFORMING.**—Section 4303(f) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in paragraph (2), by striking “or” at the end;

(B) in paragraph (3), by striking the period at the end and inserting “, or”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(4) any removal or demotion under section 714 of title 38.”.

SEC. 203. REDUCTION OF BENEFITS FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EMPLOYEES CONVICTED OF CERTAIN CRIMES.

(a) **REDUCTION OF BENEFITS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subchapter I of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§719. Reduction of benefits of employees convicted of certain crimes

“(a) **REDUCTION OF ANNUITY FOR REMOVED EMPLOYEE.**—(1) The Secretary shall order that the covered service of an employee of the Department removed from a position for performance or misconduct under section 713, 714, or 7461 of this title or any other provision of law shall not be taken into account for purposes of calculating an annuity with respect to such individual under chapter 83 or chapter 84 of title 5, if—

“(A) the Secretary determines that the individual is convicted of a felony (and the conviction is final) that influenced the individual’s performance while employed in the position; and

“(B) before such order is made, the individual is afforded—

“(i) notice of the proposed order; and

“(ii) an opportunity to respond to the proposed order by not later than ten business days following receipt of such notice; and

“(C) the Secretary issues the order—

“(i) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual responds under subparagraph (B)(ii), not later than five business days after receiving the response of the individual; or

“(ii) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual does not respond, not later than 15 business days after the Secretary provides notice to the individual under subparagraph (B)(i).

“(2) Any individual with respect to whom an annuity is reduced under this subsection may appeal the reduction to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management pursuant to such regulations as the Director may prescribe for purposes of this subsection.

“(b) **REDUCTION OF ANNUITY FOR RETIRED EMPLOYEE.**—(1) The Secretary may order that the covered service of an individual who the Secretary proposes to remove for performance or misconduct under section 713, 714, or 7461 of this title or any other provision of law but who leaves employment at the Department prior to the issuance of a final decision with respect to such action shall not be taken into account for purposes of calculating an annuity with respect to such individual under chapter 83 or chapter 84 of title 5, if—

“(A) the Secretary determines that individual is convicted of a felony (and the conviction is final) that influenced the individual’s performance while employed in the position; and

“(B) before such order is made, the individual is afforded—

“(i) notice of the proposed order;

“(ii) opportunity to respond to the proposed order by not later than ten business days following receipt of such notice; and

“(C) the Secretary issues the order—

“(i) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual responds under subpara-

graph (B)(ii), not later than five business days after receiving the response of the individual; or

“(ii) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual does not respond, not later than 15 business days after the Secretary provides notice to the individual under subparagraph (B)(i).

“(2) Upon the issuance of an order by the Secretary under paragraph (1), the individual shall have an opportunity to appeal the order to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management before the date that is seven business days after the date of such issuance.

“(3) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall make a final decision with respect to an appeal under paragraph (2) within 30 business days of receiving the appeal.

“(c) **ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS.**—Not later than 37 business days after the Secretary issues a final order under subsection (a) or (b) with respect to an individual, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall recalculate the annuity of the individual.

“(d) **LUMP-SUM ANNUITY CREDIT.**—Any individual with respect to whom an annuity is reduced under subsection (a) or (b) shall be entitled to be paid so much of such individual’s lump-sum credit as is attributable to the period of covered service.

“(e) **SPOUSE OR CHILDREN EXCEPTION.**—(1) The Secretary, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, shall prescribe regulations that may provide for the payment to the spouse or children of any individual referred to in subsection (a) or (b) of any amounts which (but for this subsection) would otherwise have been nonpayable by reason of such subsections.

“(2) Regulations prescribed under paragraph (1) shall be consistent with the requirements of section 8332(o)(5) and 8411(l)(5) of title 5, as the case may be.

“(f) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘covered service’ means, with respect to an individual subject to a removal for performance or misconduct under section 719 or 7461 of this title or any other provision of law, the period of service beginning on the date that the Secretary determines under such applicable provision that the individual engaged in activity that gave rise to such action and ending on the date that the individual is removed from or leaves a position of employment at the Department prior to the issuance of a final decision with respect to such action.

“(2) The term ‘lump-sum credit’ has the meaning given such term in section 8331(8) or section 8401(19) of title 5, as the case may be.

“(3) The term ‘service’ has the meaning given such term in section 8331(12) or section 8401(26) of title 5, as the case may be.”.

(2) **CLERICAL AMENDMENT.**—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 7 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 717 the following new item:

“719. Reduction of benefits of employees convicted of certain crimes.”.

(b) **APPLICATION.**—Section 719 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(1), shall apply to any action of removal of an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 719 or 7461 of such title or any other provision of law, commencing on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 204. AUTHORITY TO RECOUP BONUSES OR AWARDS PAID TO EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Subchapter I of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, as amended

by section 203, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 721. Recoupment of bonuses or awards paid to employees of Department

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary may issue an order directing an employee of the Department to repay the amount, or a portion of the amount, of any award or bonus paid to the employee under title 5, including under chapters 45 or 53 of such title, or this title if—

“(1) the Secretary determines that the individual engaged in misconduct or poor performance prior to payment of the award or bonus, and that such award or bonus would not have been paid, in whole or in part, had the misconduct or poor performance been known prior to payment; and

“(2) before such repayment, the employee is afforded—

“(A) notice of the proposed order; and

“(B) an opportunity to respond to the proposed order by not later than 10 business days after the receipt of such notice; and

“(3) the Secretary issues the order—

“(A) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual responds under paragraph (2)(B), not later than five business days after receiving the response of the individual; or

“(B) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual does not respond, not later than 15 business days after the Secretary provides notice to the individual under paragraph (2)(A).

“(b) APPEAL OF ORDER OF SECRETARY.—(1) Upon the issuance of an order by the Secretary under subsection (a) with respect to an individual, the individual shall have an opportunity to appeal the order to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management before the date that is seven business days after the date of such issuance.

“(2) The Director shall make a final decision with respect to an appeal under paragraph (1) within 30 business days after receiving such appeal.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter, as amended by section 203(a)(2), is further amended by inserting after the item relating to section 719 the following new item:

“721. Recoupment of bonuses or awards paid to employees of Department.”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 721 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to an award or bonus paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act or the amendments made by this Act may be construed to modify the certification issued by the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget regarding the performance appraisal system of the Senior Executive Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 205. AUTHORITY TO RECOUP RELOCATION EXPENSES PAID TO OR ON BEHALF OF EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 204, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 723. Recoupment of relocation expenses paid on behalf of employees of Department

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary may issue an order directing an employee of the Department to repay the amount, or a portion of the amount, paid to or on behalf of the employee under title 5 for relocation expenses, including any expenses under section 5724 or 5724a of such title, or this title if—

“(1) the Secretary determines that relocation expenses were paid following an act of fraud or malfeasance that influenced the authorization of the relocation expenses;

“(2) before such repayment, the employee is afforded—

“(A) notice of the proposed order; and

“(B) an opportunity to respond to the proposed order not later than ten business days following the receipt of such notice; and

“(3) the Secretary issues the order—

“(A) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual responds under paragraph (2)(B), not later than five business days after receiving the response of the individual; or

“(B) in the case of a proposed order to which an individual does not respond, not later than 15 business days after the Secretary provides notice to the individual under paragraph (2)(A).

“(b) APPEAL OF ORDER OF SECRETARY.—(1) Upon the issuance of an order by the Secretary under subsection (a) with respect to an individual, the individual shall have an opportunity to appeal the order to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management before the date that is seven business days after the date of such issuance.

“(2) The Director shall make a final decision with respect to an appeal under paragraph (1) within 30 days after receiving such appeal.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is further amended by inserting after the item relating to section 721, as added by section 204(b), the following new item:

“723. Recoupment of relocation expenses paid on behalf of employees of Department.”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 723 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to an amount paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to or on behalf of an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs for relocation expenses on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 206. TIME PERIOD FOR RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF ADVERSE ACTIONS AGAINST SUPERVISORY EMPLOYEES WHO COMMIT PROHIBITED PERSONNEL ACTIONS.

Section 731(a)(2)(B) of title 38, United States Code, as redesignated by section 102(a)(2), is amended—

(1) in clause (i), by striking “14 days” and inserting “10 days”; and

(2) in clause (ii), by striking “14-day period” and inserting “10-day period”.

SEC. 207. DIRECT HIRING AUTHORITY FOR MEDICAL CENTER DIRECTORS AND VISN DIRECTORS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7401 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(4) Directors of medical centers and directors of Veterans Integrated Service Networks with demonstrated ability in the medical profession, in health care administration, or in health care fiscal management.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 7404(a)(1) of such title is amended—

(1) by inserting “(A)” before “The annual”; and

(2) in subparagraph (A), as designated by paragraph (1)—

(A) by inserting “and 7401(4)” after “7306”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

“(B) Section 5377 of title 5 shall apply to a position under section 7401(4) of this title as if such position were included in the definition of ‘position’ in section 5377(a) of title 5.”.

SEC. 208. TIME PERIODS FOR REVIEW OF ADVERSE ACTIONS WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN EMPLOYEES.

(a) PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS, PODIATRISTS, CHIROPRACTORS, OPTOMETRISTS, REGISTERED NURSES, PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS, AND EXPANDED-FUNCTION DENTAL AUXILIARIES.—Paragraph (2) of section 7461(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(2) In any case other than a case described in paragraph (1) that involves or includes a question of professional conduct or competence in which a major adverse action was not taken, such an appeal shall be made through Department grievance procedures under section 7463 of this title.”.

(b) MAJOR ADVERSE ACTIONS INVOLVING PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT OR COMPETENCE.—Section 7462(b) of such title is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting “, within the aggregate time period specified in paragraph (5)(A),” after “is entitled”; and

(B) in subparagraph (A)—

(i) by striking “At least 30 days advance written notice” and inserting “Advance written notice”; and

(ii) by striking “and a statement” and inserting “a statement”; and

(iii) by inserting “and a file containing all the evidence in support of each charge,” after “with respect to each charge,”; and

(C) in subparagraph (B), by striking “A reasonable time, but not less than seven days” and inserting “The opportunity, within the time period provided for in paragraph (4)(A)”; and

(2) by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following new paragraph (3):

“(3) After considering the employee’s answer, if any, and within the time period provided for in paragraph (5)(B), the deciding official shall render a decision on the charges. The decision shall be in writing and shall include the specific reasons therefor.”;

(3) in paragraph (4)—

(A) by striking subparagraph (A) and inserting the following new subparagraph (A):

“(A) The period for the response of an employee under paragraph (1)(B) to advance written under paragraph (1)(A) shall be seven business days.”; and

(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking “30 days” and inserting “seven business days”; and

(4) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

“(5)(A) The aggregate period for the resolution of charges against an employee under this subsection may not exceed 15 business days.

“(B) The deciding official shall render a decision under paragraph (3) on charges under this subsection not later than 15 business days after the Under Secretary provides notice on the charges for purposes of paragraph (1)(A).

“(6) The procedures in this subsection shall supersede any collective bargaining agreement to the extent that such agreement is inconsistent with such procedures.”.

(c) OTHER ADVERSE ACTIONS.—Section 7463(c) of such title is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “the same notice and opportunity to answer with respect to those charges as provided in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of section 7462(b)(1) of this title” and inserting “notice and an opportunity to answer with respect to those charges in accordance with subparagraphs (A) and (B) of section 7462(b)(1) of this title, but within the time periods specified in paragraph (3)”; and

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting “, within the aggregate

time period specified in paragraph (3)(A),” after “is entitled”;

(B) in subparagraph (A), by striking “an advance written notice” and inserting “written notice”; and

(C) in subparagraph (B), by striking “a reasonable time” and inserting “time to answer”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph (3):

“(3)(A) The aggregate period for the resolution of charges against an employee under paragraph (1) or (2) may not exceed 15 business days.

“(B) The period for the response of an employee under paragraph (1) or (2)(B) to written notice of charges under paragraph (1) or (2)(A), as applicable, shall be seven business days.

“(C) The deciding official shall render a decision on charges under paragraph (1) or (2) not later than 15 business days after notice is provided on the charges for purposes of paragraph (1) or (2)(A), as applicable.”.

SEC. 209. IMPROVEMENT OF TRAINING FOR SUPERVISORS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide to each employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs who is employed as a supervisor periodic training on the following:

(1) The rights of whistleblowers and how to address a report by an employee of a hostile work environment, reprisal, or harassment.

(2) How to effectively motivate, manage, and reward the employees who report to the supervisor.

(3) How to effectively manage employees who are performing at an unacceptable level and access assistance from the human resources office of the Department and the Office of the General Counsel of the Department with respect to those employees.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) SUPERVISOR.—The term “supervisor” has the meaning given such term in section 7103(a) of title 5, United States Code.

(2) WHISTLEBLOWER.—The term “whistleblower” has the meaning given such term in section 323(g) of title 38, United States Code, as added by section 101.

SEC. 210. ASSESSMENT AND REPORT ON EFFECT ON SENIOR EXECUTIVES AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) measure and assess the effect of the enactment of this title on the morale, engagement, hiring, promotion, retention, discipline, and productivity of individuals in senior executive positions at the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(2) submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the findings of the Secretary with respect to the measurement and assessment carried out under paragraph (1).

(b) ELEMENTS.—The assessment required by subsection (a)(1) shall include the following:

(1) With respect to engagement, trends in morale of individuals in senior executive positions and individuals aspiring to senior executive positions.

(2) With respect to promotions—

(A) whether the Department is experiencing an increase or decrease in the number of employees participating in leadership development and candidate development programs with the intention of becoming candidates for senior executive positions; and

(B) trends in applications to senior executive positions within the Department.

(3) With respect to retention—

(A) trends in retirement rates of individuals in senior executive positions at the Department;

(B) trends in quit rates of individuals in senior executive positions at the Department;

(C) rates of transfer of—

(i) individuals from other Federal agencies into senior executive positions at the Department; and

(ii) individuals from senior executive positions at the Department to other Federal agencies; and

(D) trends in total loss rates by job function.

(4) With respect to disciplinary processes—

(A) regarding individuals in senior executive positions at the Department who are the subject of disciplinary action—

(i) the length of the disciplinary process in days for such individuals both before the date of the enactment of this Act and under the provisions of this Act described in subsection (a)(1); and

(ii) the extent to which appeals by such individuals are upheld under such provisions as compared to before the date of the enactment of this Act;

(B) the components or offices of the Department which experience the greatest number of proposed adverse actions against individuals in senior executive positions and components and offices which experience the least relative to the size of the components or offices' total number of senior executive positions;

(C) the tenure of individuals in senior executive positions who are the subject of disciplinary action;

(D) whether the individuals in senior executive positions who are the subject of disciplinary action have previously been disciplined; and

(E) the number of instances of disciplinary action taken by the Secretary against individuals in senior executive positions at the Department as compared to governmentwide discipline against individuals in Senior Executive Service positions (as defined in section 3132(a) of title 5, United States Code) as a percentage of the total number of individuals in senior executive positions at the Department and Senior Executive Service positions (as so defined).

(5) With respect to hiring—

(A) the degree to which the skills of newly hired individuals in senior executive positions at the Department are appropriate with respect to the needs of the Department;

(B) the types of senior executive positions at the Department most commonly filled under the authorities in the provisions described in subsection (a)(1);

(C) the number of senior executive positions at the Department filled by hires outside of the Department compared to hires from within the Department;

(D) the length of time to fill a senior executive position at the Department and for a new hire to begin working in a new senior executive position;

(E) the mission-critical deficiencies filled by newly hired individuals in senior executive positions and the connection between mission-critical deficiencies filled under the provisions described in subsection (a) and annual performance of the Department;

(F) the satisfaction of applicants for senior executive positions at the Department with the hiring process, including the clarity of job announcements, reasons for withdrawal of applications, communication regarding status of applications, and timeliness of hiring decision; and

(G) the satisfaction of newly hired individuals in senior executive positions at the Department with the hiring process and the process of joining and becoming oriented with the Department.

(c) SENIOR EXECUTIVE POSITION DEFINED.—In this section, the term “senior executive

position” has the meaning given such term in section 713 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 211. MEASUREMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DISCIPLINARY PROCESS OUTCOMES AND EFFECTIVENESS.

(a) MEASURING AND COLLECTING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall measure and collect information on the outcomes of disciplinary actions carried out by the Department of Veterans Affairs during the three-year period ending on the date of the enactment of this Act and the effectiveness of such actions.

(2) ELEMENTS.—In measuring and collecting pursuant to paragraph (1), the Secretary shall measure and collect information regarding the following:

(A) The average time from the initiation of an adverse action against an employee at the Department to the final resolution of that action.

(B) The number of distinct steps and levels of review within the Department involved in the disciplinary process and the average length of time required to complete these steps.

(C) The rate of use of alternate disciplinary procedures compared to traditional disciplinary procedures and the frequency with which employees who are subject to alternative disciplinary procedures commit additional offenses.

(D) The number of appeals from adverse actions filed against employees of the Department, the number of appeals upheld, and the reasons for which the appeals were upheld.

(E) The use of paid administrative leave during the disciplinary process and the length of such leave.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than December 31, 2017, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the disciplinary procedures and actions of the Department.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The information collected under subsection (a).

(B) The findings of the Secretary with respect to the measurement and collection carried out under subsection (a).

(C) An analysis of the disciplinary procedures and actions of the Department.

(D) Suggestions for improving the disciplinary procedures and actions of the Department.

(E) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(3) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—In this subsection, the term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(A) the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill shall be debatable for 1 hour, equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this is a historic day. You and many Members of this body

are well aware that bringing real accountability to the Department of Veterans Affairs has been a goal of mine and many of my colleagues for many years. That is why I am proud to rise today to support S. 1094, which passed the United States Senate last week via voice vote.

This bill is heavily modeled off of my bill, H.R. 1259, which passed out of the House with bipartisan support earlier this Congress, and I am proud to have worked with Senators ISAKSON, TESTER, and RUBIO to craft this vital piece of legislation.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017 would provide the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs with yet another tool to instill accountability at VA by giving him the authority to expeditiously remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee for poor performance or misconduct while still preserving an employee's rights to due process.

This bill would create an expedited procedure for all VA employees to respond and appeal to proposed removals, demotions, and suspensions for performance or misconduct, or in the case of title 38 employees, which are our healthcare providers, for a question involving direct patient care or clinical competence.

The prenotification and response process would have to be completed within 15 business days, and the employee would be entitled to an expedited appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board where the first step at the administrative judge level would be limited to 180 days.

Additionally, either party would be able to appeal the administrative judge's decision to the full MSPB and would be provided the opportunity for limited judicial review.

This bill would also provide improved protections for whistleblowers by creating a new office and an Assistant Secretary position specifically for accountability and whistleblowers. It would allow the Secretary to reduce an employee's Federal pension if they are convicted of a felony that influenced their job at VA. It would provide the Secretary with the authority to recoup a bonus provided to an employee who engaged in misconduct or malfeasance prior to receiving the bonus, and would allow the Secretary to recoup any relocation expenses that were authorized for a VA employee only through the employee's ill-gotten means, such as fraud, waste, or malfeasance.

Lastly, it would also provide the Secretary with the direct hiring authority he has been asking for so that he can hire medical center directors and VISN directors in a more expedited manner and fill the leadership vacancies across VA.

Mr. Speaker, as I have always said, I agree with all of my colleagues that the vast majority of VA employees—many of whom I know personally and call friends—are hardworking public

servants who are dedicated to providing quality healthcare and benefits for veterans.

But for far too long, the failures of bad actors have tarnished the good name of all VA employees. Unfortunately, despite the tireless efforts of our courageous whistleblowers, the extensive reporting on a lack of accountability by the media and the outrage of the American public, we still see far too many instances of VA employees not living up to the standards America expects. Most importantly, they are not living up to the standards that the men and women who have served this great Nation deserve.

This isn't a political issue. This is a veterans' issue. I can't imagine how any Member of this body can defend not standing for veterans to vote for this bipartisan legislation. The lack of accountability isn't specific to any one area of the Department. It is systemic. In the last few years, the committee discovered an instance of a VA nurse scrubbing in drunk for a veteran's surgery—I found that unbelievable—and a care support specialist in the agency's drug and addiction program taking a recovering addict to a crack house to buy him drugs and a prostitute, a VA medical center clerk participating in an armed robbery, and a practitioner watching pornography at work while they were supposedly treating a patient.

What is more, it has been proven that some senior managers have retaliated against whistleblowers, costing VA and, in turn, taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars in restitution.

All of these acts in and of themselves are egregious, but they are just the tip of the iceberg. They have one thing in common: none of these employees were held accountable in a reasonable timeframe, if at all.

There are many factors that contribute to this failure, but an antiquated civil service system and a complicated grievance process have left VA unwilling—and sometimes just unable—to jump through the many hoops to do what is right. This is not an issue unique to VA. Too often it is nearly impossible to remove a poorly performing government employee.

Officials on both sides of the aisle have expressed their concern about the current process to remove or discipline subpar employees. Just last year, Mr. Speaker, VA's then-Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson sat before our committee and admitted that it was too difficult to fire a substandard VA employee.

Further, the Government Accountability Office studied the government's ability to hold low-performing employees accountable and found that it took 6 months to a year on average, and sometimes significantly longer, to fire a poorly performing government employee—6 months to a year.

I have heard concerns that the bill will hurt the Department's ability to recruit and retain good employees. I don't buy this argument as every em-

ployee I speak to tells me the exact opposite.

Good employees want to work in an environment where they know everyone can be held accountable for their actions. I believe the current status quo hurts the morale of the employees who are doing the right thing each and every day.

This is the same for employees of the Department who are veterans. I know that some have said that this would hurt veterans who are employed at the VA since they make up a large percentage of our VA employees. But as a veteran myself and as my fellow veterans here today would agree, we don't serve, whether in uniform or civilian clothes, because we prioritize our individual protection. The mission always comes first, and at VA, the mission is our veterans.

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Veterans want to work alongside colleagues they know are working hard for the men and women who they served alongside.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I want to acknowledge some individuals who have made this bill become a reality.

First and foremost, I want to thank the 18 veterans groups representing millions of veterans and their families who are supporting this bill and real accountability at the VA. Many of them are in the gallery today, and I can't thank them enough for all they have done and all they continue to do for our Nation's heroes.

Many of these groups took a courageous stand in support of VA accountability, even when it wasn't a politically popular idea. And I especially want to thank Concerned Veterans for America, The American Legion, and Paralyzed Veterans of America for being some of our earliest and staunchest supporters.

I also want to thank someone who, this Congress, has been with us from day one, and that is the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Dr. David Shulkin. We have worked with Secretary Shulkin and his team to draft the bill that is before us today, and I am thankful for his and President Trump's support.

President Trump and Secretary Shulkin have endorsed this legislation, not because they want to punish or make it harder to recruit employees, but because they see this change is needed if the Secretary is going to meet the President's goal of truly reforming the VA.

I also want to thank the bipartisan group of Senators who we worked with in crafting this bill, including Senator ISAKSON; Senator TESTER; and the primary sponsor, Senator RUBIO. Senator RUBIO and his staff have been with me every step of the way, and I am thankful for his and his staff's efforts over the years.

I also want to thank a good friend of mine, Ranking Member WALZ, and his staff for their support and leadership.

They have been fantastic. I also want to thank Speaker RYAN and Majority Leader MCCARTHY and their staffs for helping us bring this bill to the floor.

Lastly, I would like to single out former Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller, a good friend, great leader of this committee, and my chairman for 6 years. His leadership got the ball rolling on this issue, which led to House-passed legislation twice last Congress and kept the spotlight on accountability issues at VA through his dogged oversight.

Finally, I would like to thank my staff, and especially the professional and communications staff of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for their years of hard work on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, today, we have a bipartisan, bicameral bill that makes meaningful change to VA's civil service system, while maintaining due process rights.

Today, we have the opportunity to make real and lasting changes to a broken system.

Today, we can stand together with veterans against the status quo that has failed them for far too long. They deserve better.

I hope all of you will join me, and the 18 veterans organizations that support this legislation, to do what is right and send this bill to the President's desk.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to associate myself with the chairman's remarks, especially the thanks of all the people involved in this. I think, Mr. Speaker, this is the third time we have come to this body this Congress, as the chairman and the ranking member of the VA Committee, as fellow veterans, as friends and American citizens, on issues of utmost importance to our veterans. We do have a constituency. We do have a special interest group that we look out for: America's veterans.

Those 18 groups, plus millions of Americans across this country, their collective voices through their organizations, through the Disabled American Veterans, through The American Legion, articulate every Congress in front of us what their top priorities are. This year, they came in front of us and said the three things that Congress needs to get done, needs to get right, and needs to get moving as soon as possible in this 2-year period that we have is: appeals reform, choice extension of care in the community, and an accountability bill.

Well, I am proud to say this is the third of those three. The other two have moved here in a bipartisan manner.

In the climate that we are in, and the uncertainty that the American public is feeling—quite honestly, probably the frustration they feel with this body—I think it is important to note that none of those things were easy lifts, none of them were locked in, and many of them

contained things that were pretty ideologically polarizing.

Chairman ROE, through his leadership and with the professional staff, was able to navigate to get to that point that the top priority and focus was care for veterans—making sure that care is delivered in a timely manner; making sure those delivering the care are the best possible; and, as the chairman said, if they are doing their job, they are afforded their constitutional rights and appeals. If they are not, I agree with the chairman, they should be removed as quickly as possible. They should certainly not be rewarded for that. That strengthens the VA. That strengthens those good employees.

Again, keep this in mind: This is the second largest agency in the Federal Government. It has a \$190 billion budget. It has 350,000-plus employees. It is an issue that unites us and that Americans are passionate about.

So we stand before you today with an issue that is unified, as Americans, as accountability. Certainly, the examples that Chairman ROE mentioned, no one is going to defend those. I am pleased because I think the chairman clearly understands that every time one of those issues goes unaddressed in a timely manner, it hurts the morale of the entire agency and erodes trust in the system by Americans.

Those veterans who use the VA system know they are getting quality care. On any given day, tens of thousands of appointments and procedures are being carried out in the most professional manner. All of that is undermined if a bad employee is allowed to not live up to those standards.

So I am pleased to say that I am in full support of this piece of legislation. The way this was done is the way we are taught in school how it is supposed to work. We debate, we send something there, we don't agree, then we let the Senate do that. We all work together to get something. We bring back that little, I am just a bill sitting on Capitol Hill. Now it is back over here. It is not perfect in everyone's mind, but it is certainly perfect in terms of how legislation is done and reaching those goals. Everyone compromised.

I think the chairman needs to be singled out on this. I thank him for commenting about Chairman Miller. We had Mike Michaud on our side work on that, too. Others have been here and done it, but we needed someone to get it over the line.

The three pieces I mentioned—appeals, choice, and accountability—are certainly things that were on everybody's mind. All three are going to pass through this House.

Just a couple of notes on this. This does maintain due process protections for employees, and I support that. I hope we can come together and pass the compromise piece.

The bill promotes accountability by giving the VA the tools it needs to hold bad employees accountable, while

maintaining those constitutional-mandated workplace rights.

At this point, I would say that Secretary Shulkin has earned the trust of, certainly, this committee, certainly of the veterans service organizations, and I would say, if you don't know, the American people. He has asked for some of these things. I take that very seriously. If he says this will add to accountability, if he says this will make his job better in delivering care for veterans, that weighs heavily.

He asked us for these things. He asked and was part of making that. We should be grateful that he is willing to work with Congress.

It also requires VA to evaluate supervisors based on their protection of whistleblowers. This commonsense provision aligns the incentives for supervisors to protect whistleblowers when they shed light on dangerous situations and problematic employees at the agency.

I want to be clear: we don't support collective bargaining rights just because it is a union issue that we think should be there, those of us who ideologically believe workplace protections allow for a larger voice and protect good employees who are pointing out bad behavior from being arbitrarily fired without a collective will to fight back.

One person in a manager's office with no support or no legal right is a very dangerous situation. One employee being backed by workplace guarantees and their union collectively bargained rights helps make us stronger.

The bill requires the VA to improve its training regarding whistleblower disclosures. This is a really key piece. We want to ensure there are no excuses for employees at the VA to not know how to handle protected disclosures. Proper training will be a key to ensure all employees and not just supervisors understand the importance.

No matter what this bill does, it would be hard to support if it didn't do the things the chairman said. It does protect those constitutional rights. It maintains all existing due process protections in current law by ensuring there is notice and an opportunity to respond before an employee is fired.

The bill even improves the appeals process by requiring the VA to provide an employee with the complete evidence file when they are fired, thereby empowering them to appeal sooner. If someone is wrongfully accused of wrongdoing, now they are going to see and have the entire file. We are just asking that they do it sooner.

If someone commits one of the acts that the chairman talked about, it is indefensible for it to take 6 months or a year to have it adjudicated. We certainly want them to have a fair due process, but, again, if we are waiting to get that done, that is holding a position for someone else that could be serving veterans. It also keeps an employee under the cloud of not getting it done and moving on. If they are innocent, we want to move it on as quickly

as possible. We do not jeopardize or change any of their appeal process to come back.

Now is the time to bring real, long-lasting constitutional accountability measures to the Department of Veterans Affairs. I would hope we could come together to pass this. Again, the entire goal of all of the people involved with this was to improve the care for this Nation's veterans, ensuring people's rights to be heard, and a fair due process if they are accused of something, but with the intention that if you are not serving our veterans in the manner that you should, then there are other places you should work. This ensures that those tools are there.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY), the majority leader.

Mr. MCCARTHY. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank Chairman ROE and the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for their work on this legislation and their focus on reforming the VA. I know they and the Secretary are all committed to making sure our veterans get the best—and only the best—no excuses.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has an honorable task to care for and heal our veterans. We made a promise in this country that, if you serve, your fellow citizens will take care of you. That is through the employees of the VA that we as a nation fulfill the promise. It is for this reason that we cannot accept the failures and backlogs in our veterans' programs.

We all know that there are thousands of great employees at the VA who consider their duty to care for the veterans as much bigger than just a job. But the few bad apples are spoiling the whole barrel.

We know how this works. You can have an office or a team committed to doing the best job possible. But when one isn't pulling their weight; when somebody is breaking the rules and getting away with it; when bad people get transferred or promoted, instead of fired; that totally destroys the whole organization. It undermines morale, makes the team ineffective, and allows for failures to continue or get worse. Failures at the VA have life-or-death consequences.

This has happened for years—years, where a person who was jailed got leave to serve time and then returned to the VA; years, where an employee showed up drunk to work and participated in a surgery; years, where a psychiatrist watched deeply inappropriate videos with a veteran in the room; and after years of all this and none of them getting fired, the good employees become dispirited, the culture of the VA will decline, and too many of our veterans receive low-quality care, if they can get care at all.

Mr. Speaker, the VA is steeped in a culture of ambivalence, coupled with a lack of accountability, and our veterans suffer as a result. Fixing the culture at the VA requires us to acknowledge the great work of the many, without leaving them tainted with the incompetence and scandal of the few. It requires removing the bad apples.

So I am glad that we are finally sending this bill to the President's desk. The House passed a similar bill in 2015, but the Senate did not act. We passed another in the new Congress earlier this year.

Now that our Senate counterparts have voted, we will take our final step today to send this legislation to the President's desk. Once President Trump signs this into law, I predict we will begin to see the culture change at the VA and our veterans will get the care we promised them and they deserve.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO), my good friend and the vice ranking member of the full Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for yielding time. And I want to thank Ranking Member WALZ and Chairman ROE for their work on the issue of accountability and their tireless commitment to our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.

Throughout the debate over accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs, I have advocated for legislation that holds VA employees accountable, without violating their constitutional right to due process.

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This legislation strikes that balance far better than previous accountability proposals. This compromise respects current grievance procedures, maintains existing due process protections, and improves the appeals process by requiring managers to present employees with all of the evidence before they move on a disciplinary action.

Today we are voting to strengthen whistleblower protections. This bill codifies the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, and it mandates that its Director is a Senate-confirmed position instead of a political appointee. It also offers training on how to handle whistleblowers correctly, which will encourage employees to come forward if they witness misconduct.

Do I have concerns about this bill? Absolutely, I do. This is not the accountability legislation that I would have written. We must always remember that a third of VA employees are veterans themselves, and they deserve the workplace protections afforded to them in the Constitution as well as the respect of this Congress. But my concerns pale in comparison to the serious

and numerous institutional issues raised by accountability bills previously advanced in the House.

Passing this bill today will accomplish several important objectives:

We will fulfill the repeated requests from veteran service organizations and the VA itself for a stronger accountability system.

We will support the VA's continuing effort to create a culture of excellence.

We will provide veterans greater confidence that the VA is prepared to meet their needs.

Finally, by passing this bill, we can shift our focus from who is fired from the VA to who is hired at the VA.

As I stand here today, there are nearly 50,000 vacant jobs at the VA. This is a significant and urgent challenge. Ultimately, the success of the Department of Veterans Affairs will depend on recruiting, training, and retaining the highest quality talent available.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Veterans' Affairs Committee to streamlining the hiring process and ensuring that the VA has the staff and expertise it needs to provide veterans the care and support they have earned.

I applaud the Senate for forging this compromise, and I again want to recognize Chairman ROE and Ranking Member WALZ for their important work.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from California (Mr. TAKANO) for his support.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), my good friend and vice chair of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act.

As a grateful nation, we must implement meaningful VA reform. Every day veterans contact my office seeking assistance in dealing with the agency. Like many of my colleagues here, I have full-time staff specifically dedicated to helping veterans with VA casework. I hear from veterans every day who are waiting for care, waiting for an answer, or simply waiting to finally be heard and recognized.

These are true American heroes, Mr. Speaker. We must do all we can to help them. The VA should be rolling out the red carpet for our veterans and treating them like the heroes they are.

The VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act is good, commonsense legislation. If a VA employee is involved in misconduct, they should be demoted, suspended, or fired—certainly not promoted or given a bonus. If a VA employee sees misconduct and wants to report it, they should not fear repercussions.

Of course, the vast majority of VA employees are hardworking and dedicated professionals. At the end of the day, this bill is about holding the bad actors accountable and protecting the

whistleblowers and refocusing the VA on its mission to serve our Nation's heroes. With the passage of the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, we are turning the page to a fresh start for the VA.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman ROE for doing such an outstanding job and also the ranking member for working in a bipartisan fashion. I appreciate it so very much. This is the way Congress should operate.

God bless our veterans.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BROWNLEY), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Health.

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill to hold bad actors accountable and make the VA a stronger system for our Nation's veterans.

Since the unacceptable wait time scandal came to light in 2014, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee has worked diligently to fix the long-term problems at the VA and to ensure we are serving our veterans as well as they have served us.

From top to bottom, the number one priority for almost every VA employee is serving our veterans. But when an employee does not live up to this mission, engages in misconduct, or puts veterans at risk, we must ensure that the VA is able to hold them accountable.

It is critically important that we acknowledge that the vast majority of the 350,000 VA employees, a third of whom are veterans themselves, are hardworking individuals who have dedicated themselves to serving our country and our Nation's veterans. By being able to hold accountable the few bad actors in the VA, we not only serve our veterans, but we make the job of the rest of the workforce easier to perform.

Because we need a world-class, 21st century VA, this bill also provides the Secretary with direct hiring authority for senior management so that we can bring on the talent we need to properly serve our veterans.

This is an important example of what we can get done when we work in a bipartisan manner. I want to thank Chairman ROE and Ranking Member WALZ, both the chairman and ranking member of the Senate for working with our VSOs and the VA to find a compromise on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I support this compromise. I ask my colleagues to vote "yes." This is a very good bill.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN), an Army and Marine veteran deployed to Iraq.

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I rise today in support of the Department of Veterans Affairs and Whistleblower Protection Act, which the House of Representatives will consider today.

Time and time again, I have called to reform the VA, an organization that has been mired in a culture of corruption and bureaucratic incompetence. The VA has consistently failed to meet our Nation's obligations to veterans, the men and women who have sacrificed so much in the protection of our freedoms.

This act also provides the necessary protections for those who do the right thing and come forward to report wrongdoing. This legislation makes it possible to fire the bad VA employees who have failed our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues, along with those in the Senate, for their hard work and support of this legislation. I look forward to getting it to the President's desk for his signature and to finally bringing accountability to the VA.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. PETERS), a friend of all of our veterans and a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Speaker, for everything our veterans have given in service to the country, they have earned their benefits and access to timely, quality healthcare at the VA. That is the promise that was made to them when they volunteered to serve. That is the promise that we in Congress are obligated to keep.

Honoring this promise is not just a matter of resources; it also depends on changing the actual culture at the VA. From the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the doctors and nurses, to the administrators who deal with the flood of appointments that come in, it has to be about serving the veteran, not about serving the bureaucracy.

For as long as I have been in Congress, improving VA accountability has been a bipartisan goal. I am glad to see us working across the aisle once again on this legislation that builds on the progress we made in 2014.

This bill strengthens whistleblower protections, which encourages employees to call out careless or criminal behavior that we have unfortunately seen too often at VAs around the country. It gives the Secretary greater authority to remove or discipline poorly performing and negligent employees, and it provides a reasonable and efficient appeals process for VA employees that is the subject of compromise.

The bill won't solve all the problems at the VA, but by holding bad actors accountable and protecting the hardworking employees who care for our veterans, this bipartisan legislation will improve on the service that our veterans receive.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work done by my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, the administration, and the veterans service organizations to craft this important piece of legislation, and I urge my colleagues to vote "yes." Let's send this bill to the President's desk and help veterans in my district in San Diego and across the country get the care that they have earned.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. POLIQUIN), my good friend and a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. POLIQUIN. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the Floor on this important issue.

Gentlemen, it was our first Commander in Chief, George Washington, who said something to the effect that we can never expect our young men and women to step forward and fight for our country unless those who have already returned from the battlefield are taken care of.

This is a solemn oath that we all have to honor. It is critically important. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, in the State of Maine, we have about 125,000 veterans, and we love our veterans. We understand what it is like to fight for our freedom and to stand up for our way of life.

In the State of Maine, we have Togus Medical Center, which is the first veterans hospital in the country, about 150 years old. We understand this. They have great employees, and many of them are veterans themselves.

However, a couple of years ago our country was shocked to learn that there were and are some bad actors in this whole process. A few years ago, we learned that some of the folks at the veterans facility in Phoenix, Arizona, were cooking the scheduling books in order to get paid more money through a bonus program when, in fact, they did not and had not scheduled mental health appointments for some of our veterans who were at risk, and, as a result, a number of those veterans died. This is absolutely unacceptable.

There is nobody who has fought for this country on the front lines who comes home, who needs help, that should be denied help; and it certainly shouldn't be those who are supposed to take care of them who are cooking the books for their own benefit.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am asking every Republican and Democrat here in this Chamber to support the Senate's bill, 1094. This is a good bill that holds the VA employees accountable for improper behavior. And, yes, sir, it does give, Mr. Speaker, management at the VA the opportunity to replace, fire, or otherwise, those who are supposed to care for our veterans who have chosen not to do so. Please support S. 1094.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire how much time I have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois). The gentleman from Minnesota has 15½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Tennessee has 14 minutes remaining.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am certainly willing to yield some of my time to the gentleman from Tennessee if there are other speakers who would like to speak on this if the gentleman's time runs short. If I could save myself 3 minutes for my closing, I would certainly be

willing to do that. I am not certain what the parliamentary procedure is to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1515

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DUNN), a veteran and a member of the committee, to speak on this issue.

Mr. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017. This important legislation will streamline the arduous process to remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee for poor performance, negligence, or misconduct.

We all know the list of scandals: veterans dying on wait lists, intoxicated surgical staff, armed robbery, grossly mismanaged construction projects. Yet the civil service rules allow bad VA employees to stay on the public payroll.

Our veterans deserve better.

Today we take a bold step toward reversing that failure. This legislation will allow Secretary Shulkin to immediately remove bad employees as he works to restructure and improve veterans' care. It also ensures that whistleblowers are protected from retaliation. The bottom line is that it implements real accountability at the VA, accountability to the men and women who have bravely served this country.

The Veterans Affairs Accountability Act is an important first step in addressing poor performance and misconduct at the VA, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this much-needed legislation.

I thank the chair and the ranking member very much for their work on this.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARRINGTON), chairman of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, it is my highest privilege to serve with Chairman ROE and Ranking Member WALZ on the VA Committee, and I am grateful for the honor to serve as chairman of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

I want to thank Chairman ROE for his leadership on an issue that I believe gets at the root cause of many of the problems, maybe most of the problems that plague the Department of Veterans Affairs: the lack of accountability. Where you don't have a culture of accountability in an organization, you have mediocrity; and mediocrity and excellence in service do not and cannot coexist.

We are talking about serving our veterans, the men and women who are willing to sacrifice everything for our freedom and security. These folks gave

their best to our country, and they deserve the very best from our country.

Having almost half a million delinquent disability claims is not our very best; having veterans wait in line for months to see a physician, not our best; having hundreds of billions of dollars in improper payments is not our best; waiting 6 months to a year to terminate somebody for misconduct and poor performance is definitely not our best.

People all over this country, hard-working Americans, get up every day; they work hard; they perform; they deliver results; and if they don't, they lose their job. If they are small-business owners, they go out of business. We ought to have no less expectation for our Federal Government and its employees, especially those who serve our veterans.

The VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act gives the Secretary the tools he needs to hold his employees accountable for serving our veterans and to change the culture from one that accepts mediocrity to one that expects excellence.

I applaud Chairman ROE and Ranking Member WALZ for helping our country take a big step towards delivering on our promises to our veterans.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. RUTHERFORD), a member of our committee and, for many years, who was in the process of protecting us in law enforcement.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 1094, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.

As we have all seen from various reports and news stories, increased accountability at the VA is long, long overdue. For far too long, the leadership in the Department of Veterans Affairs has been unable to make firing decisions that would be common sense in any other setting.

The VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act gives the Secretary the authority to fire the bad actors and creates a removal process that is more in line with the private sector. It also gives the Secretary the ability to punish poor performers by recouping bonuses and relocation expenses. We must ensure that employees who fail to do their jobs are not rewarded but are, instead, held accountable.

Another part of this legislation is the enhanced protection for whistleblowers. These are employees who are doing the right thing and advocating for our veterans. They should not be faced with retribution by their leadership.

One of the most important jobs of this Congress is working to improve the lives of our Nation's veterans. When our fellow Americans bravely put on the uniform and serve, we must ensure that that sacrifice does not go unnoticed.

In my time serving on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have seen how Congress and the leadership of the VA, in partnership with veterans service organizations, are working to create the culture of service and accountability that our veterans truly deserve.

As Secretary Shulkin has often said, the VA needs changing, and I believe this bill is a huge step in that direction.

I would like to thank Chairman ROE for his leadership, and Senator RUBIO. This issue is crucial to the 150,000 veteran men and women of northeast Florida, and I thank them for their leadership, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN), the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee chair and a lieutenant general in the Marine Corps.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 1094, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act.

Anyone who has been responsible for the success of a business or organization knows that the most important part of the equation is the people. It is no different with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our veterans have given their all, and they deserve our all; but, unfortunately, vulnerabilities in the VA's administrative processes have led to incompetence, neglect, and even unchecked illegal activity on the part of a small number of VA employees.

Unfortunately, lack of oversight and accountability in the hiring and retention process mean that the VA is still failing our veterans. Even in the few instances where the VA has tried to discipline employees for wrongdoing or neglect, it has been foiled by a complex and lengthy administrative process that rarely yields results.

S. 1094 addresses the VA's administrative shortcomings by providing the Secretary with the authority to remove, demote, or suspend any employee for poor performance or misconduct while, at the same time, enhancing protections for whistleblowers.

As a leader of marines and a Vietnam veteran, I know what our servicemen and -women across generations and conflicts have sacrificed for our freedoms and our country. They don't just deserve quality care; they have earned it.

We made a commitment to defend our veterans just as they have defended our way of life, and that starts with reforms that restore efficiency and accountability at Veterans Affairs.

I would like to thank Chairman ROE and the committee for all their hard work. I strongly urge my colleagues to support.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman

from Puerto Rico (Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN), a new member of our committee, who is doing a great job.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, since the day I was elected to Congress, I pledged to do everything in my power to help veterans receive the care and attention they deserve. S. 1094 will ensure that persons hired to care for the health and the well-being of our veterans do so according to VA regulations, and those who fail in their duties are held accountable. Moreover, this bill protects whistleblowers from retaliation when they alarm us of VA misconduct.

Currently, Puerto Rico has one VA regional benefit office, one VA hospital, and a few outpatient clinics. These facilities provide all the VA services to the island's veterans. This bill will help ensure places with limited VA facilities, like Puerto Rico, will be efficiently administered and make certain that the VA's employees adhere to the standards of excellence that our men and women in uniform expect.

I thank Senator RUBIO for sponsoring this bill, but I need to thank Chairman ROE for guiding this important legislation on the House floor the same way he did with H.R. 1529.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 6½ minutes remaining.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. MESSER), my good friend who I have served with for 6 years on the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's leadership on this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans deserve high-quality healthcare. They have earned it. That is why I rise today to urge support of S. 1094, the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act. This is landmark, bipartisan legislation to reform the VA and improve care for our veterans after years of poor performance and scandal.

My grandfather is a World War II veteran who regularly attends the VA in Indianapolis, so I know firsthand that the vast majority of employees at the VA are honest and hardworking public servants. Lack of accountability at the agency, though, has allowed a few bad actors to damage the VA and harm our vets, from manipulating wait lists to letting calls to the suicide hotline go unanswered, to theft and wrongful prescribing of opioids.

Our veterans deserve better.

The Veterans Accountability Act will hold bureaucrats accountable for wrongdoing, make it easier to dismiss bad employees, and strengthen protections for whistleblowers. These are commonsense reforms and long overdue.

Because our military men and women, our Hoosier heroes, fought to

protect us, the least we can do is fight for them and ensure that they get high-quality care.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of the bill.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAST), a combat-wounded veteran, Bronze Star winner, Purple Heart winner, Defense Meritorious Service and Army Commendation Medal winner.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman for yielding me time, and the ranking member, both of the gentlemen, for their leadership, and also our Senator from Florida, Senator RUBIO, for his leadership on this bill.

This is a great bill, and that is why I couldn't be more happy than to rise and speak about this bill. For a long time, our veterans have deserved better, and this bill is exactly that: It is better.

Veterans across the board—Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard—they have common experiences and common healthcare challenges as a result of certainly combat, but also as a result of just simply the austere life of being in the military. Whether it is a daily life of jumping out of planes or roping out of helicopters or kicking in doors or jumping off the back end of trucks, you live an austere life.

Oftentimes, I hear people say a year in the military can be like a dog-year. It is tough on you, and that is why the VA is so critical. It is so critical that the VA maintain an expertise in providing for our unique healthcare needs.

I get my healthcare from the VA. I know many VA employees who are hardworking and certainly unyielding in their dedication, but I have also encountered many who are not, plain and simple, many who lack the hunger or who lack the appropriate mentality or the decorum to care for our men and women who are willing to give their last breath in defense of our country. This is the reality.

Every single veteran needs to be treated like the most important patient ever to be seen every single time they walk into the VA. Anything less is a failure.

In the past several years, this bureaucracy of rules, it has obstructed the VA's ability to go out there and fire employees who have been charged with armed robbery, who have been accused of being drunk while performing surgeries, and this simply cannot stand.

There should never be somebody allowed to service our veterans who would receive a dishonorable discharge in the military for what their actions are. They shouldn't be allowed the honor of serving people who served this country in World War II or Korea or Vietnam or Panama, Kosovo, Bosnia, Somalia, the Gulf war, Iraq, Afghanistan. Folks shouldn't be given that honor lightly.

It is exactly why this bill, the Department of Veterans Affairs Account-

ability and Whistleblower Protection Act is so important. The bill establishes whistleblower protections so that we can ensure veterans get the best possible care and make sure that no veteran is ever dishonored twice by the same person.

I want to thank you again for yielding me time. I want to thank you on behalf of every single veteran across this country for this great bill.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman MAST for those kind words and words spoken for every American veteran.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK).

□ 1530

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman, the ranking member, and Senator RUBIO for their leadership.

Mr. Speaker, scandal after scandal has caused heightened distrust between veterans and the VA. For far too long, veterans nationwide have been disrespected by those who are supposed to be advocates for them, sometimes with deadly consequences.

Be it in regional offices—like the one in Philadelphia, which my office has worked closely with—or medical centers, from Phoenix to Florida, we have seen the devastating impact of the current culture of mismanagement and distrust, and its impact on backlogged claims and lack of care for those who devoted their lives to serve our country.

The legislation before the House today institutes the needed reforms throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs by granting the authority, and the expectation, that the Secretary remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee for poor performance or misconduct.

Rebuilding this trust between Veterans Affairs and those who had served us must be a priority. The Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act is crucial to reforming this trust, and I am proud to support it. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do the same. We must serve our veterans as well as they have served us.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, you heard it from a wide range of folks here on the floor. This is the way Congress is supposed to work and this is what is expected of us. This is what my constituents in southern Minnesota expect, and this is what the gentleman from Tennessee's or the gentleman from Florida's constituents expect: look at a problem, assess it, come up with some different solutions, and debate those out.

I want to be clear, as I said earlier, these are tough issues. There was debate—heated debate. We may even have raised our voices a few times doing

this, but that is the way the world's greatest democracy is supposed to function.

Again, three of the most pressing issues, three of the top priorities of this Nation's veterans, all addressed in the first 6 six months of this Congress, all addressed to the satisfaction of a wide, bipartisan VSO community that is grateful for it.

I think, in trying to find these challenges and understanding them, people are trying to get at the heart of this. I do think there are great frustrations, and I have said, totally indefensible of the examples given.

But when we had this debate before, there were some examples of bad managers inadvertently firing people who were pointing out things that the manager was doing; and the due process considerations got that person their job back, and we got rid of the manager.

I think that when we first started debating this, I made the case that this could be a right-to-work bill in disguise. This bill is not that. This bill, as the chairman said, was not the intention. The intention was accountability. The intention of the bill was to streamline the process while protecting those due process rights.

I am grateful that the chairman, as always, kept his word. He followed through and he negotiated that.

The thing that I would say before closing here, Mr. Speaker, is that I agree with the majority leader. I think the combination of many things that we are doing possesses the potential to see real reforms moving in the right direction. Something that I think hasn't been mentioned here—that the Secretary did with consultation with the chairman, myself, and others—was that he took the action of streamlining the medical record procedure between the DOD, and the VA added to that.

There is transformational, generational-type change happening at the VA, but none of this will matter. And the majority leader said he expects to see that. We must ensure that it happens. We must ensure the accountability, we must monitor, we must ask that it is happening, and we must come back at this again. If there is a glitch that was unintended, let's come back at it again in this same manner of reaching an outcome.

This is a positive day, Mr. Speaker. I would hope that those folks paying attention to this and watching—certainly the veterans, but everyone—know that Congress can work together; Congress can take on pressing issues; Congress can come up with bipartisan solutions; and Congress can agree that the thing that defines us most is not Republican or Democrat—it is U.S. citizen, it is veteran, and it is care for them.

Today I am proud to get this through here. Let's send it on to the President, and let's all celebrate the Administration signing this into law and moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today is a proud day, I think, for this Nation. The United States of America does more for its veterans than all other nations in the world combined; and I don't think that, on some days, that is even enough for these heroes that have served us and many of whom have spoken this afternoon.

I want to express my appreciation to the minority and the majority staff, and to Sergeant Major WALZ for walking hand in hand. As he said, this was not an easy process. There were a lot of difficult issues that we both dealt with.

I also want to thank our friends on the Senate side who also went through the same process and brought a bill to the floor that we can all, I think, enthusiastically support.

The Secretary said when he was first chosen—and I might add, 100-0, Secretary Shulkin was a bipartisan agreement in the Senate. I think he is a leader to transform the VA. He asked for accountability. He said: I cannot do my job as Secretary if I don't have this piece of legislation.

So he was very supportive, along with President Trump, so we gave him that.

We also protected due process rights for the employees who work for the VA—a very important issue.

Whistleblower protections. We could not do our job, Mr. Speaker, if we did not have these whistleblowers. There are 350,000 employees, 154 medical centers, and over 800 outpatient clinics. There is no way that we could monitor that without their help. So their protections are there.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage both sides of the aisle to support S. 1094, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support increased accountability and whistleblower protection at the Department of Veterans Affairs. And I recognize that S. 1094 represents a compromise approach that was crafted specifically to address severe, longstanding problems at VA hospitals.

But a number of S. 1094's provisions concern me. As Vice Ranking Member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, these concerns would be amplified if these provisions were applied to other contexts or across the federal government in future legislation.

A partial list of problematic provisions includes:

The bill requires a lower standard of evidence that would allow removal, demotion, and other disciplinary actions even if the majority of evidence is exculpatory.

The bill supersedes existing collective bargaining agreements.

The bill provides for the clawback and forfeiture of bonuses and pensions under a standard that is broad and susceptible to abuse.

The bill denies senior executives of the right to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board, which they have under current law.

The bill imposes unreasonable timelines on the ability of employees to respond to allegations that may lead to discipline and eliminates the ability of the Merit System Protection Board to mitigate penalties that may have been overly harsh and raise due process concerns.

The bill prohibits the use of administrative leave for employees challenging demotions. This provision could also force employees to use their accrued sick or annual leave while on appeal, which Courts have considered a taking in violation of the Constitution.

While S. 1094 is a bipartisan compromise aimed at dealing with a specific and troubled department, a number of its provisions are problematic and would not serve as an example for future civil service-related legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 378, the previous question is ordered.

The question is on the third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on questions previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

The motion to recommit on H.R. 2581;

Passage of H.R. 2581, if ordered; and

Passage of S. 1094.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

VERIFY FIRST ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to recommit on the bill (H.R. 2581) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require the provision of social security numbers as a condition of receiving the health insurance premium tax credit, offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ), on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk will redesignate the motion.

The Clerk redesignated the motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 193, nays 231, not voting 6, as follows:

[Roll No. 305]

YEAS—193

Adams	Gabbard	Nolan
Aguilar	Gallego	Norcross
Barragán	Garamendi	O'Halleran
Bass	Gonzalez (TX)	O'Rourke
Beatty	Gottheimer	Pallone
Bera	Green, Al	Panetta
Beyer	Green, Gene	Pascarell
Bishop (GA)	Grijalva	Payne
Blumenauer	Gutiérrez	Pelosi
Blunt Rochester	Hanabusa	Perlmutter
Bonamici	Hastings	Peters
Boyle, Brendan	Heck	Peterson
F.	Higgins (NY)	Pingree
Brady (PA)	Himes	Pocan
Brown (MD)	Hoyer	Polis
Brownley (CA)	Huffman	Price (NC)
Bustos	Jackson Lee	Quigley
Butterfield	Jayapal	Raskin
Capuano	Jeffries	Rice (NY)
Carbajal	Johnson (GA)	Richmond
Cárdenas	Johnson, E. B.	Rosen
Carson (IN)	Jones	Roybal-Allard
Cartwright	Kaptur	Ruiz
Castor (FL)	Keating	Ruppersberger
Castro (TX)	Kelly (IL)	Rush
Chu, Judy	Kennedy	Ryan (OH)
Cicilline	Khanna	Sánchez
Clark (MA)	Kihuen	Sarbanes
Clarke (NY)	Kildee	Schakowsky
Clay	Kilmer	Schiff
Cleaver	Kind	Schneider
Clyburn	Krishnamoorthi	Schrader
Cohen	Kuster (NH)	Scott (VA)
Connolly	Langevin	Scott, David
Conyers	Larsen (WA)	Serrano
Cooper	Larson (CT)	Sewell (AL)
Correa	Lawrence	Shea-Porter
Costa	Lawson (FL)	Sherman
Courtney	Lee	Sinema
Crist	Levin	Sires
Crowley	Lewis (GA)	Slaughter
Cuellar	Lieu, Ted	Smith (WA)
Davis (CA)	Lipinski	Soto
Davis, Danny	Loeb sack	Speier
DeFazio	Lofgren	Suozzi
DeGette	Lowenthal	Swallow (CA)
Delaney	Lowe y	Takano
DeLauro	Lujan Grisham,	Thompson (CA)
DelBene	M.	Thompson (MS)
Demings	Luján, Ben Ray	Titus
DeSaulnier	Lynch	Tonko
Deutch	Maloney,	Torres
Dingell	Carolyn B.	Tsongas
Doggett	Maloney, Sean	Vargas
Doyle, Michael	Matsui	Veasey
F.	McCollum	Vela
Duncan (TN)	McEachin	Velázquez
Ellison	McGovern	Visclosky
Engel	McNerney	Walz
Eshoo	Meeks	Wasserman
Espallat	Meng	Schultz
Esty (CT)	Moore	Waters, Maxine
Evans	Moulton	Watson Coleman
Foster	Murphy (FL)	Welch
Frankel (FL)	Nadler	Wilson (FL)
Fudge	Neal	Yarmuth

NAYS—231

Abraham	Bucshon	DesJarlais
Aderholt	Budd	Diaz-Balart
Allen	Burgess	Donovan
Amash	Byrne	Duffy
Amodel	Calvert	Duncan (SC)
Arrington	Carter (GA)	Dunn
Babin	Carter (TX)	Emmer
Bacon	Chabot	Estes (KS)
Banks (IN)	Chaffetz	Farenthold
Barletta	Cheney	Faso
Barr	Coffman	Ferguson
Barton	Cole	Fitzpatrick
Bergman	Collins (GA)	Fleischmann
Biggs	Collins (NY)	Flores
Bilirakis	Comer	Fortenberry
Bishop (MI)	Comstock	Fox
Bishop (UT)	Conaway	Franks (AZ)
Black	Cook	Frelinghuysen
Blackburn	Costello (PA)	Gaetz
Blum	Cramer	Gallagher
Bost	Crawford	Garrett
Brady (TX)	Culberson	Gibbs
Brat	Curbelo (FL)	Gohmert
Bridenstine	Davidson	Goodlatte
Brooks (AL)	Davis, Rodney	Gosar
Brooks (IN)	Denham	Gowdy
Buchanan	Dent	Graves (GA)
Buck	DeSantis	Graves (LA)

Graves (MO)	Massie	Royce (CA)
Grothman	Mast	Russell
Guthrie	McCarthy	Rutherford
Harper	McCaull	Sanford
Harris	McClintock	Scalise
Hartzler	McHenry	Schweikert
Hensarling	McKinley	Scott, Austin
Herrera Beutler	McMorris	Sensenbrenner
Hice, Jody B.	Rodgers	Sessions
Higgins (LA)	McSally	Shimkus
Hill	Meadows	Shuster
Holding	Meehan	Simpson
Hollingsworth	Messer	Smith (MO)
Hudson	Mitchell	Smith (NE)
Huizenga	Moolenaar	Smith (NJ)
Hultgren	Mooney (WV)	Smith (TX)
Hunter	Mullin	Smucker
Hurd	Murphy (PA)	Stefanik
Issa	Newhouse	Stewart
Jenkins (KS)	Noem	Stivers
Jenkins (WV)	Nunes	Taylor
Johnson (LA)	Olson	Tenney
Johnson (OH)	Palazzo	Thompson (PA)
Jordan	Palmer	Thornberry
Joyce (OH)	Paulsen	Tiberi
Katko	Pearce	Tipton
Kelly (MS)	Perry	Trott
Kelly (PA)	Pittenger	Turner
King (TX)	Poe (TX)	Upton
King (NY)	Poliquin	Valadao
Kinzing	Posey	Wagner
Knight	Ratcliffe	Walberg
Kustoff (TN)	Reed	Walker
Labrador	Reichert	Walorski
LaHood	Renacci	Walters, Mimi
LaMalfa	Rice (SC)	Webster (FL)
Lamborn	Roby	Wenstrup
Lance	Roe (TN)	Westerman
Latta	Rogers (AL)	Williams
Lewis (MN)	Rogers (KY)	Wilson (SC)
LoBiondo	Rohrabacher	Wittman
Long	Rokita	Womack
Loudermilk	Rooney, Francis	Woodall
Love	Rooney, Thomas	Yoder
Lucas	J.	Yoho
Luetkemeyer	Ros-Lehtinen	Young (AK)
MacArthur	Roskam	Young (IA)
Marchant	Ross	Zeldin
Marino	Rothfus	
Marshall	Rouzer	

NOT VOTING—6

Cummings	Griffith	Napolitano
Granger	Johnson, Sam	Weber (TX)

□ 1603

Messrs. VALADAO, GOHMERT, RUSSELL, Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER, Messrs. WITTMAN, WALKER, BROOKS of Alabama, GROTHMAN, YOUNG of Alaska, and WENSTRUP changed their vote from “yea” to “nay.”

Mrs. LAWRENCE, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. SLAUGHTER, KELLY of Illinois, and FRANKEL of Florida changed their vote from “nay” to “yea.”

So the motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 238, noes 184, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 306]

AYES—238

Abraham	Gohmert	Olson
Aderholt	Goodlatte	Palazzo
Allen	Gosar	Palmer
Amash	Gowdy	Paulsen
Amodel	Graves (GA)	Pearce
Arrington	Graves (LA)	Perry
Babin	Graves (MO)	Peterson
Bacon	Grothman	Pittenger
Banks (IN)	Guthrie	Poe (TX)
Barletta	Harper	Poliquin
Barr	Harris	Posey
Barton	Hartzler	Ratcliffe
Bergman	Hensarling	Reed
Biggs	Herrera Beutler	Reichert
Bilirakis	Hice, Jody B.	Renacci
Bishop (MI)	Higgins (LA)	Rice (SC)
Bishop (UT)	Hill	Roe (TN)
Black	Holding	Rogers (AL)
Blackburn	Hollingsworth	Rogers (KY)
Blum	Hudson	Rohrabacher
Bost	Huizenga	Rokita
Brady (TX)	Hultgren	Rooney, Francis
Brat	Hunter	Rooney, Thomas
Bridenstine	Hurd	J.
Brooks (AL)	Issa	Ros-Lehtinen
Brooks (IN)	Jenkins (KS)	Roskam
Buchanan	Jenkins (WV)	Ross
Buck	Johnson (LA)	Rothfus
Bucshon	Johnson (OH)	Rouzer
Budd	Jones	
Burgess	Jordan	
Byrne	Joyce (OH)	
Calvert	Kaptur	
Carter (GA)	Katko	
Carter (TX)	Kelly (MS)	
Chabot	Kelly (PA)	
Chaffetz	King (IA)	
Cheney	King (NY)	
Coffman	Kinzing	
Cole	Knight	
Collins (GA)	Kustoff (TN)	
Collins (NY)	Labrador	
Comer	LaHood	
Comstock	LaMalfa	
Conaway	Lamborn	
Cook	Lance	
Costello (PA)	Latta	
Cramer	LoBiondo	
Crawford	Long	
Cuellar	Loudermilk	
Culberson	Love	
Curbelo (FL)	Lucas	
Davidson	Luetkemeyer	
Davis, Rodney	Lynch	
DeFazio	MacArthur	
Denham	Marchant	
Dent	Marino	
DeSantis	Marshall	
DesJarlais	Massie	
Donovan	Mast	
Duffy	McCarthy	
Duncan (SC)	McCaull	
Duncan (TN)	McClintock	
Dunn	McHenry	
Emmer	McKinley	
Estes (KS)	McMorris	
Farenthold	Rodgers	
Faso	McSally	
Ferguson	Meadows	
Fitzpatrick	Meehan	
Fleischmann	Messer	
Flores	Mitchell	
Fortenberry	Moolenaar	
Fox	Mooney (WV)	
Franks (AZ)	Mullin	
Frelinghuysen	Murphy (PA)	
Gaetz	Newhouse	
Gallagher	Noem	
Garrett	Nunes	
Gibbs	O'Halleran	

NOES—184

Adams	Brown (MD)	Clarke (NY)
Aguilar	Brownley (CA)	Clay
Barragán	Bustos	Cleaver
Bass	Butterfield	Clyburn
Beatty	Capuano	Cohen
Bera	Carbajal	Connolly
Beyer	Cárdenas	Conyers
Bishop (GA)	Carson (IN)	Cooper
Blumenauer	Cartwright	Correa
Blunt Rochester	Castor (FL)	Costa
Bonamici	Castro (TX)	Courtney
Boyle, Brendan	Chu, Judy	Crist
F.	Cicilline	Crowley
Brady (PA)	Clark (MA)	Davis (CA)

Davis, Danny	Kilmer	Price (NC)
DeGette	Kind	Quigley
Delaney	Krishnamoorthi	Raskin
DeLauro	Kuster (NH)	Rice (NY)
DelBene	Langevin	Richmond
Demings	Larsen (WA)	Rosen
DeSaulnier	Larson (CT)	Roybal-Allard
Deutch	Lawrence	Ruiz
Diaz-Balart	Lawson (FL)	Ruppersberger
Dingell	Lee	Rush
Doggett	Levin	Ryan (OH)
Doyle, Michael F.	Lewis (GA)	Sánchez
Ellison	Lieu, Ted	Sarbanes
Engel	Lipinski	Schakowsky
Eshoo	Loeb	Schiff
Espallat	Lofgren	Schneider
Esty (CT)	Lowenthal	Schrader
Evans	Lowey	Scott (VA)
Foster	Lujan Grisham, M.	Scott, David
Frankel (FL)	Luján, Ben Ray	Serrano
Fudge	Maloney,	Sewell (AL)
Gabbard	Carolyn B.	Shea-Porter
Galego	Maloney, Sean	Sires
Garamendi	Matsui	Slaughter
Gonzalez (TX)	McCollum	Smith (WA)
Gotthelmer	McEeachin	Soto
Green, Al	McGovern	Speier
Green, Gene	McNerney	Suozi
Grijalva	Meeks	Swalwell (CA)
Gutiérrez	Meng	Takano
Hanabusa	Moore	Thompson (CA)
Hastings	Moulton	Thompson (MS)
Heck	Murphy (FL)	Titus
Higgins (NY)	Nadler	Tonko
Himes	Neal	Torres
Hoyer	Nolan	Tsongas
Huffman	Norcross	Vargas
Jackson Lee	O'Rourke	Veasey
Jayapal	Pallone	Vela
Jeffries	Panetta	Velázquez
Johnson (GA)	Pascarell	Visclosky
Johnson, E. B.	Payne	Walz
Keating	Pelosi	Wasserman
Kelly (IL)	Perlmutter	Schultz
Kennedy	Peters	Waters, Maxine
Khanna	Pingree	Watson Coleman
Kihuen	Pocan	Welch
Kildee	Polis	Wilson (FL)
		Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—8

Cummings	Johnson, Sam	Sherman
Granger	Lewis (MN)	Weber (TX)
Griffith	Napolitano	

□ 1610

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated against:

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on rollcall No. 306.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO OFFER RESOLUTION RAISING A QUESTION OF THE PRIVILEGES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 2(a)(1) of rule IX, I rise to give notice of my intent to raise a question of the privileges of the House.

The form of the resolution is as follows:

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the President shall immediately disclose his tax return information to the House of Representatives and the American people.

Whereas, President Nixon explained that "People have got to know whether or not their President is a crook" when he invited the Joint Committee on Taxation to audit his returns after the Internal Revenue Service gave him an unwarranted tax discount;

Whereas, according to the Tax History Project, every President since

Gerald Ford has disclosed his tax return information to the public;

Whereas, the Chairmen of the Committee on Ways and Means, Joint Committee on Taxation, and the Committee on Finance have the authority to request the President's tax returns under section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986;

Whereas, pursuant to Article I, section 7, clause 1 of the Constitution, often referred to as the Origination Clause, the House of Representatives has the sole authority to initiate legislation that raises revenue for the national government, and the Committee on Ways and Means is considering a comprehensive reform of the Tax Code;

Whereas, according to media reports analyzing President Trump's leaked 2005 tax return, we know that had his own tax plan been in place, he would have paid an estimated mere 3.48 percent rate instead of a 24 percent rate, saving him \$31.3 million;

Whereas, according to The New York Times, the President used a legally dubious tax maneuver in 1995 that could have allowed him to avoid paying any Federal taxes for 18 years;

Whereas, President Trump holds "interests as the sole or principal owner in approximately 500 separate entities," according to his attorneys, and the President's tax plan proposes to cut the tax rate on such "pass-through" entities from 39.6 percent to 15 percent;

Whereas, one analysis estimated that President Trump would personally save \$6.7 million from two tax breaks included in the Republicans' first tax cut, which they misleadingly call the American Health Care Act;

Whereas, without the President's tax returns, the American people cannot determine how much he will personally benefit from proposed changes to the Tax Code;

Whereas, an ABCNews/Washington Post poll found that 74 percent of Americans would like President Trump to disclose his tax returns and the most-signed petition on the White House website calls for the release of the President's tax return information to verify compliance with the Emoluments Clause, with more than 1,097,000 signatures as of date of this resolution;

Whereas, disclosure of the President's tax returns could help those investigating Russian influence in the 2016 election better understand the President's financial ties to the Russian Federation, Russian businesses, and Russian individuals;

Whereas, after breaking his pledge to make his tax returns available, President Trump instead presented a one-page letter from a law firm giving him a clean bill of health on any business dealings with Russians, but failed to note that the very same law firm boasted of the "prestigious honor" of being named "Russia Law Firm of the Year" for 2016;

Whereas, former Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James Comey, before he was fired by President

Trump, publicly confirmed that the Bureau has been investigating potential ties between President Trump's campaign and Russia since July and that the Russian President Vladimir Putin favored a Trump electoral victory;

Whereas, President Trump's son-in-law and senior advisor, Jared Kushner, met during the Presidential transition at the behest of the Russian Ambassador with Sergey N. Gorkov, a graduate of a school run by the successor to the KGB and who was appointed by Vladimir Putin to head a Russian state-owned bank that is on the U.S. sanctions list;

Whereas, Mr. Kushner proposed establishing a secret back channel of communications directly to Vladimir Putin, even considering the use of Russian embassy facilities to do so;

Whereas, Attorney General Jeff Sessions falsely stated during his Senate confirmation hearing that he "did not have communications with the Russians," when in fact he met at least twice during the campaign with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak;

Whereas, former Director Comey testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee that President Trump had asked him in the Oval Office about "letting Flynn go," referring to the investigation into former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn's business ties to Russia;

Whereas, President Trump stated on May 11, 2017, that he had decided that he was going to fire Comey because of "this Russia thing";

Whereas, former Director Comey, on June 8, 2017, testified that Special Counsel Robert Mueller could investigate whether President Trump's actions with regard to Director Comey and the Flynn investigation constituted obstruction of justice;

Whereas, in 2013, President Trump said, "Well, I've done a lot of business with the Russians. They're smart and they're tough," and President Trump's son, Donald Trump, Jr., told a news outlet in 2008 that "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets";

Whereas, against the advice of ethics attorneys and the nonpartisan Office of Government Ethics, the President has refused to divest his ownership stake in his businesses;

Whereas, the Director of the nonpartisan Office of Government Ethics said that the President's plan to transfer his business holdings to a trust managed by family members is "meaningless" and "does not meet the standards that . . . every President in the past four decades has met";

Whereas, the Emoluments Clause was included in the Constitution for the express purpose of preventing Federal officials from accepting any "present, Emolument, Office, or Title . . . from any King, Prince, or foreign state";

Whereas, the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C., has hired a

“director of diplomatic sales” to generate high-priced business among foreign leaders and diplomatic delegations;

Whereas, the Joint Committee on Taxation reviewed the tax returns of President Richard Nixon in 1974 and made the information public;

Whereas, the Committee on Ways and Means used the authority under section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 in 2014 to make public the confidential tax information of 51 taxpayers;

Whereas, the Committee on Ways and Means has now voted three times along party lines to continue to cover-up President Trump's tax returns;

Whereas, the House of Representatives has now refused nine times to act on President Trump's tax returns;

Whereas, the American people have the right to know whether or not their President is operating under conflicts of interest related to international affairs, tax reform, Government contracts, or otherwise;

Whereas, the House of Representatives undermines its dignity and the integrity of its proceedings by continuing the cover-up of President Trump's tax returns: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives shall, one, immediately request the tax return and return information of Donald J. Trump for tax years 2006 through 2015, as provided under section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as well as the tax return and return information with respect to the President's businesses of each business entity disclosed by Donald J. Trump on his Office of Government Ethics Form 278e, specifically each corporation and each partnership within the meaning of subchapter K of chapter 1 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 where he is listed as an officer, director, or equivalent, or exercises working control; and

Two, postpone consideration of tax reform legislation until the elected Representatives of the American people in this House have obtained President Trump's tax returns and return information to ascertain how any changes to the Tax Code might financially benefit the President.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under rule IX, a resolution offered from the floor by a Member other than the majority leader or the minority leader as a question of the privileges of the House has immediate precedence only at a time designated by the Chair within 2 legislative days after the resolution is properly noticed.

Pending that designation, the form of the resolution noticed by the gentleman from Texas will appear in the RECORD at this point.

The Chair will not at this point determine whether the resolution constitutes a question of privilege. That determination will be made at the time designated for consideration of the resolution.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT OF 2017

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, 5-minute voting will continue.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on passage of the bill (S. 1094) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 368, nays 55, not voting 7, as follows:

[Roll No. 307]

YEAS—368

Abraham	Comer	Gonzalez (TX)
Adams	Comstock	Goodlatte
Aderholt	Conaway	Gosar
Aguiar	Connolly	Gottheimer
Allen	Conyers	Gowdy
Amash	Cook	Graves (GA)
Amodei	Cooper	Graves (LA)
Arrington	Correa	Graves (MO)
Babin	Costa	Green, Gene
Bacon	Costello (PA)	Grothman
Banks (IN)	Courtney	Guthrie
Barletta	Cramer	Harper
Barr	Crawford	Harris
Barton	Crist	Hartzler
Beatty	Cuellar	Heck
Bera	Culberson	Hensarling
Bergman	Curbelo (FL)	Herrera Beutler
Biggs	Davidson	Hice, Jody B.
Bilirakis	Davis (CA)	Higgins (LA)
Bishop (GA)	Davis, Danny	Higgins (NY)
Bishop (MI)	Davis, Rodney	Hill
Bishop (UT)	DeFazio	Himes
Black	DeGette	Holding
Blum	Delaney	Hollingsworth
Blumenauer	DeLauro	Hudson
Blunt Rochester	DelBene	Huffman
Bonamici	Demings	Huizenga
Bost	Denham	Hultgren
Boyle, Brendan	Dent	Hunter
F.	DeSantis	Hurd
Brady (PA)	DesJarlais	Issa
Brady (TX)	Deutch	Jenkins (KS)
Brat	Diaz-Balart	Jenkins (WV)
Bridenstine	Dingell	Johnson (LA)
Brooks (AL)	Doggett	Johnson (OH)
Brooks (IN)	Donovan	Jones
Brownley (CA)	Doyle, Michael	Jordan
Buchanan	F.	Joyce (OH)
Buck	Duffy	Kaptur
Bucshon	Duncan (SC)	Katko
Budd	Duncan (TN)	Keating
Burgess	Dunn	Kelly (MS)
Bustos	Emmer	Kelly (PA)
Butterfield	Eshoo	Kennedy
Byrne	Estes (KS)	Khanna
Calvert	Esty (CT)	Kihuen
Capuano	Farenthold	Kildee
Carbajal	Faso	Kilmer
Cárdenas	Ferguson	Kind
Carter (GA)	Fitzpatrick	King (IA)
Carter (TX)	Fleischmann	King (NY)
Cartwright	Flores	Kinzinger
Castor (FL)	Fortenberry	Knight
Castro (TX)	Foster	Krishnamoorthi
Chabot	Fox	Kuster (NH)
Chaffetz	Frankel (FL)	Kustoff (TN)
Cheney	Franks (AZ)	Labrador
Chu, Judy	Frelinghuysen	LaHood
Cicilline	Gabbard	LaMalfa
Clark (MA)	Gaetz	Lamborn
Clay	Gallagher	Lance
Cleaver	Gallego	Langvin
Coffman	Garamendi	Larsen (WA)
Cole	Garrett	Larson (CT)
Collins (GA)	Gibbs	Latta
Collins (NY)	Gohmert	Lawrence

Lawson (FL)	Palazzo	Sherman
Lewis (MN)	Palmer	Shimkus
Lieu, Ted	Panetta	Shuster
Lipinski	Pascrell	Simpson
LoBiondo	Paulsen	Sinema
Loeback	Pearce	Sires
Lofgren	Perlmutter	Slaughter
Long	Perry	Smith (MO)
Loudermilk	Peters	Smith (NE)
Love	Peterson	Smith (NJ)
Lowenthal	Pingree	Smith (TX)
Lowey	Pittenger	Smucker
Lucas	Poe (TX)	Soto
Luetkemeyer	Poliquin	Speier
Lujan Grisham,	Polis	Stefanik
M.	Posey	Stewart
Luján, Ben Ray	Price (NC)	Stivers
MacArthur	Quigley	Swalwell (CA)
Maloney,	Ratcliffe	Takano
Carolyn B.	Reed	Taylor
Maloney, Sean	Reichert	Tenney
Marchant	Renacci	Thompson (CA)
Marino	Rice (SC)	Thompson (PA)
Marshall	Roby	Thornberry
Massie	Roe (TN)	Tiberi
Mast	Rogers (AL)	Tipton
Matsui	Rogers (KY)	Titus
McCarthy	Rohrabacher	Tonko
McCauley	Rokita	Torres
McClintock	Rooney, Francis	Trott
McCollum	Rooney, Thomas	Tsongas
McGovern	J.	Turner
McHenry	Ros-Lehtinen	Upton
McKinley	Rosen	Vadaro
McMorris	Roskam	Veasey
Rodgers	Ross	Vela
McNerney	Rothfus	Visclosky
McSally	Rouzer	Wagner
Meadows	Roybal-Allard	Walberg
Meehan	Royce (CA)	Walden
Meeks	Ruiz	Walker
Meng	Ruppersberger	Walorski
Messer	Rush	Walters, Mimi
Mitchell	Russell	Walz
Moolenaar	Rutherford	Webster (FL)
Mooney (WV)	Ryan (OH)	Welch
Moore	Sanford	Wenstrup
Moulton	Sarbanes	Westerman
Mullin	Scalise	Williams
Murphy (FL)	Schiff	Wilson (SC)
Murphy (PA)	Schneider	Wittman
Neal	Schrader	Womack
Newhouse	Schweikert	Woodall
Noem	Scott, Austin	Yarmuth
Nolan	Scott, David	Yoder
Nunes	Sensenbrenner	Yoho
O'Halleran	Sessions	Young (IA)
O'Rourke	Sewell (AL)	Zeldin
Olson	Shea-Porter	

NAYS—55

Barragán	Hastings	Raskin
Bass	Hoyer	Rice (NY)
Beyer	Jackson Lee	Richmond
Brown (MD)	Jayapal	Sánchez
Carson (IN)	Jeffries	Schakowsky
Clarke (NY)	Johnson (GA)	Scott (VA)
Clyburn	Johnson, E. B.	Serrano
Cohen	Kelly (IL)	Smith (WA)
Crowley	Lee	Suozi
DeSaulnier	Levin	Thompson (MS)
Ellison	Lewis (GA)	Vargas
Engel	Lynch	Velázquez
Espallat	McEachin	Wasserman
Evans	Nadler	Schultz
Fudge	Norcross	Waters, Maxine
Green, Al	Pallone	Watson Coleman
Grijalva	Payne	Wilson (FL)
Gutiérrez	Pelosi	Young (AK)
Hanabusa	Pocan	

NOT VOTING—7

Blackburn	Griffith	Weber (TX)
Cummings	Johnson, Sam	
Granger	Napolitano	

□ 1635

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to record my last vote due to ineffective card. Had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on rollcall No. 307.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I was absent during rollcall votes No. 305, No. 306, and No. 307 due to my spouse's health situation in California. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on the Democratic Motion to Recommit H.R. 2581. I would have voted "nay" on the Passage of H.R. 2581—Verify First Act. I would have also voted "nay" on the Passage of S. 1094—Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Mariel Ridgway, one of his secretaries.

RECOGNIZING OPHELIA GAINES

(Mr. CARTER of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the remarkable career of Mrs. Ophelia Gaines, who will retire as executive director of Concerted Services on June 30, 2017.

Mrs. Gaines' career with Concerted Services, a nonprofit action group that focuses on fighting poverty throughout 28 counties in southeast Georgia, has spanned nearly 44 years.

Mrs. Gaines began her work with the company in 1973, traveling door to door in low-income communities, educating families on how to enroll in programs like Head Start, Energy Assistance, and Senior Nutrition.

Mrs. Gaines' altruistic career continued with her decision to teach social work classes at both Georgia Southern University and Savannah State University, enabling young people to carry on her work throughout southeast Georgia.

I am proud to rise today to recognize Mrs. Gaines, and thank her for all of her outstanding contributions to our local communities and to the lives of our fellow Georgians.

WARRIORS CHAMPIONSHIP WIN

(Ms. LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, last night the world watched my home team, the Golden State Warriors, end a historic season by bringing home their second national championship in 3 years.

The Warriors, led by unanimous Finals MVP Kevin Durant and legendary players Steph Curry, Draymond Green, and Klay Thompson, showed the power of teamwork both on and off the court.

The team is an example for young people, showing that if you can work together and trust one another, you can accomplish anything.

Mr. Speaker, these finals against the talented Cleveland Cavaliers were a

thrill to watch. We saw basketball at its best—incredible talent and a real passion from both sides. Thank you to the Warriors team for making our dreams of another championship a reality.

This remarkable team has made history as one of the best ever, winning a record 15 straight games in the playoffs and clinching a 16-to-1 postseason record.

Thank you to Coaches Steve Kerr and Mike Brown, the entire Warriors staff, and all of the talented players on their well-deserved victory.

Throughout this journey, Warriors fans have stayed loyal and faithful, and they deserve this victory as well.

My dear late mother, Mildred Massey, was the Warriors' biggest fan, and I know she is smiling from above. I can't wait to celebrate with all the Warriors fans and players back in Oakland. Go Warriors, go Oakland, go Dub Nation.

CREATING ACCOUNTABILITY AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

(Ms. TENNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud the passage of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability Act. This important legislation will create a culture of accountability at the VA and begin the process of restoring the VA's sole mission of providing high-quality care for our Nation's veterans.

For far too long, the VA has been plagued with scandal. From years' long wait lists to out-of-control bonuses, the VA needs real reform.

In their selfless service to our great Nation, our veterans have sacrificed so much to protect us. They shouldn't be plagued with difficulty accessing the care that they need and deserve.

As the mother of an Active-Duty U.S. Marine, I am sympathetic to the needs of our veterans. It is among my top priorities to make sure that we advocate for a better, more accountable VA. On behalf of the veterans of the 22nd District of New York, I am pleased to see this legislation pass with bipartisan support.

Today, we are correcting a wrong that has hurt too many of our Nation's heroes. I look forward to seeing the President sign this measure into law and have full confidence in VA Secretary Shulkin's ability to implement the important reforms contained in this critical piece of legislation.

RECOGNIZING SAN PEDRO HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS SOFTBALL TEAM

(Ms. BARRAGÁN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the San Pedro High

School girls softball team who late last month reclaimed their crown as L.A. City Section Division I champions.

On the night of Friday, May 19, the Pirates won their first city title in 8 years and 17th overall. Star pitcher Cindy Robles persevered through illness to throw a four-hitter with three strikeouts, illustrating her toughness after coming down with a 102-degree fever earlier in the day.

Her teammates were behind her every step of the way, always making the key play at the necessary moment. By rallying together and continually picking each other up, the Pirates girls softball team represents the true spirit of California's 44th Congressional District.

No matter what adversity we might face individually, our community always finds a way to rally together in pursuit of our common goals. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to pay tribute to these strong young women and all they represent.

EXPORT AMERICAN LIQUIFIED NATURAL GAS

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, last week, Cheniere Energy, headquartered in Houston, Texas, delivered its first liquified natural gas shipment out of the Sabine Pass terminal to northern Europe, to the Netherlands, and to Poland. This follows shipments to southern Europe from earlier this year.

Put simply, this is a tremendous game changer. Exporting LNG is not just an economic issue, it is a geopolitical security issue. These shipments help thwart Russian aggression and weaken Russia's stranglehold over Europe, and it is about time.

Under Secretary Perry's leadership, the Energy Department is finally approving licenses for LNG terminals to ship LNG overseas.

Our natural gas is cheaper and more abundant in supply than anywhere in the world. Harnessing our domestic energy resources and exporting some of it to our friends and to our allies around the world makes sense for our economy and for our national security.

We should apply the Blue Bell ice cream philosophy to our domestic energy resources. It is: Use what we can and sell the rest.

And that is just the way it is.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT BURDEN

(Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, today, Americans are more burdened by student loan debt than ever. The statistics are truly stunning. They owe over \$1.4 trillion in student loan debt spread out among 44 million borrowers. That is about \$600

billion more, or double the total United States credit card debt.

And the problem is only getting worse. The average class of 2016 graduate has more than \$37,172 in student loan debt, which is up 6 percent from the previous year. Yet President Trump just proposed gutting the best lifelines and safeguards that these borrowers have.

The Trump budget cuts the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which makes public interest and non-profit work attainable for students, despite their debt loads; it consolidates income-based repayment programs that are critical to managing repayment; and it completely scraps subsidized interest on some student loans.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot profess to stand for the middle class, for American workers, and for American values while pulling the rug out from under 44 million borrowers bearing the weight of what is the greatest systemic threat to our economic stability.

AMERICANS' RIGHT TO LIVE IN FAITH

(Mr. BIGGS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, during his confirmation hearing to become President Trump's Deputy Director for the Office of Management and Budget, Russ Vought faced inappropriate and unconstitutional lines of questioning from two of the Budget Committee's Democratic Senators directly relating to his Christian faith.

A Senator took direct issue with an article Mr. Vought wrote last year describing a core tenet of the Christian faith that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ. After attempting to twist that belief into a claim that Mr. Vought is hateful and discriminatory toward non-Christians, Senator SANDERS said: "This nominee is really not someone who this country is supposed to be about. I will vote 'no.'"

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vought's qualifications are excellent. To take the view of Senator SANDERS that is clearly tied to a disagreement over a religious tenet is discriminatory in and of itself.

Article 6 of the U.S. Constitution states "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

Mr. Vought's Christian faith should not have been the subject of this harsh questioning, and no excuse should ever justify a public official putting someone's faith on trial. We should not ignore this episode but, rather, stand in defense of Mr. Vought's right to live his faith as we defend the religious freedom of all Americans.

AVON GROVE RED DEVILS WIN STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

(Mr. SMUCKER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMUCKER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Avon Grove Red Devils men's lacrosse team on their State championship victory.

The Red Devils finished the season with a 23-2 record, beating Philadelphia area powerhouse Conestoga in the PIAA Class 3A title game with a thrilling 5-4 victory.

Sophomore Zach Augustine was one of the heroes, scoring the game-winning goal in double overtime, a moment that he described as "unbelievable."

This redeeming victory for them comes 3 years after a heartbreaking loss for the Red Devils in the 2014 State title game. Senior midfielder Doug Jones, a freshman on that 2014 team, said: "I remember as a freshman saying to myself that I wanted to get back here. We knew we had one goal: to win this. It means the absolute world to us."

I applaud the commitment displayed by these young men, both to each other and to their community. Congratulations to the Avon Grove Red Devils team, the coaches, their families, and the faculty, staff, and students that made this championship so special.

CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BELARUS—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 115-47)

THE SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida) laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days of the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with that provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine democratic processes or institutions of Belarus that was declared in Executive Order 13405 of June 16, 2006, is to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2017.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine democratic processes or institutions of Belarus, to commit human rights abuses related to political repression, and to engage in public corruption con-

tinue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13405 with respect to Belarus.

DONALD J. TRUMP.
THE WHITE HOUSE, June 13, 2017.

THE PEOPLE'S NIGHT

THE SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WALKER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, many times as our Members in the House travel throughout our districts, we are often asked: What is being done in the House? What is being accomplished?

Well, this afternoon we are going to take a few minutes and allow you to hear directly from the Members, something that we like to call the People's Night. This is the people's House, so from time to time we like to bypass any of the outlets and talk directly to the American people.

Now, a lot of people might not know specifically what has been going on in the House. Well, I think these visuals may aid in specifically talking about some of the things that we are accomplishing.

For example, if you will see the chart, this chart lists the House-passed bills to date. It also includes the last four Presidents. As you can see, the House of the 115th Congress has passed 158 pieces of legislation; 158 bills we have sent to the Senate or to the President.

The House isn't the only one that has been busy. Our President has been busy. In fact, if you will notice this chart behind, you will notice that we are also at a record pace if you look at the last four, five Presidents. Of these bills, the President has signed 37 bills into law, compared with the next most, which was George Herbert Walker Bush many years ago, with 35.

That is what the House is working on; it is what we are working with the Senate, we are working with the President.

But this afternoon I want you to hear directly from some of the Members themselves who have been very instrumental not only in what we have accomplished, but also some of the things that we are looking forward to accomplishing over the next few months.

The first person I would like to introduce to you is our chairman of the Financial Services Committee, JEB HENSARLING. Representative HENSARLING is from Texas' Fifth District and has been instrumental in doing something that we have been promising and trying to accomplish for many years.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I yield to Chairman JEB HENSARLING, my good friend.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to

me, and let me thank him for his leadership of the Republican Study Committee and what that committee means to the conservative movement and what it means to the cause of freedom and opportunity for so many working men and women.

I especially want to thank the gentleman from North Carolina for his work on the American Health Care Act and what that means to so many of our constituents to truly be able, after this rise of premiums where people are paying more to get less in healthcare, to really bring us to a moment where we can have patient-centered healthcare. I just want to thank him for that.

These are actually hopeful times for the American people. Regrettably, as we know, working America hasn't received a pay increase in almost a decade. Their savings have remained decimated since the financial crisis. So to get this economy moving again, our President knows, this Congress knows that, number one, we do have to return to patient-centered healthcare, not for what that means just to our families, but what it means to our economy.

We have to have fundamental tax reform as well, and I know that our House Ways and Means Committee is working on that assiduously, but we also have to have fundamental reform of our regulations. There is no regulation that has imposed more burden on our economy than the Dodd-Frank Act. In fact, it is more burdensome to our economy than all Obama-era regulations combined. It is simply that bad.

When they passed this bill in the wake of the financial crisis, they told us that it would lift the economy. But instead of lifting the economy, we are mired in the slowest, weakest recovery in the postwar era.

They told us that it would end bank bailouts, but cynically, it codified them into law and backed it up with a taxpayer bailout fund.

They told us and they promised us it would make the economy more stable, but instead, the big banks have gotten bigger and the small banks have gotten fewer.

They told us and promised us it would help the consumer, but instead of helping the consumer, free checking at banks has been cut in half. Bank fees have increased. Has anybody with-in earshot tried to get a mortgage recently? They are harder to come by. They cost hundreds of more dollars to close. There are fewer credit card offerings.

What has happened here is, under Dodd-Frank, those who are seeking credit are now paying more and receiving less. This is hurting not only our families, but it has hurt our economy. Small business lending hasn't recovered, entrepreneurship is at a generational low.

So that is why it was so important that on Thursday of last week this body, this House, took action and passed the Financial CHOICE Act. The Financial CHOICE Act represents, for

all of America, economic opportunity for all, bank bailouts for none.

It replaces the era of bank bailouts with bankruptcy for these large financial institutions. It replaces Washington micromanagement with market discipline. That is how we help to grow this economy. It will create more credit for more people.

There is a whole part of this legislation that is totally devoted to our small banks and credit unions because it is our small community financial institutions that help finance our small businesses. It is our small businesses which are the job engine of America. That is what has been choked off by this heavy hand of Obama regulation.

So I was proud to play a very small role in the House to bring the Financial CHOICE Act to the House so that we can indeed, as the acronym suggests, create hope and opportunity for investors, for consumers, for entrepreneurs. We want the animal spirits in the American economy to move again. We want that budding optimism that tomorrow can be a better day, that you can be your own boss, that you can start your own small business. We want that opportunity to flourish yet again in America. That is what we managed to do with the Financial CHOICE Act.

I am very happy that we have now sent it over to the Senate. We look forward to having the Senate act upon this. The American people can't wait to get this economy moving again.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman for highlighting this for the American people, and I want to thank him again for his leadership of the Republican Study Committee. Without this august group, the Congress' largest caucus, the caucus of conservatives, this would not have happened, and I want to thank him for that.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Chairman HENSARLING. Most people would not describe your role as a small part in making sure that people have more opportunities in our financial industry.

Not that we are showing Texas any partiality this evening, but our second Representative is a former Federal prosecutor from the great State of Texas, and many would consider one of the top conservatives in all of the United States Congress, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RATCLIFFE), my friend, is here to talk about the CFPB, among some other issues. So without further ado, I yield to Mr. RATCLIFFE.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. I would like to thank my colleague and friend from North Carolina, the gentleman, Congressman WALKER, for yielding to me and for hosting this Special Order tonight, which is fittingly titled, "The People's Night." After all, there is a reason that the United States House of Representatives is often called the people's House. It is because our job is to fight for the priorities of the people that we are privileged to represent here.

Over the past 6 months, Republicans have been fighting for the people,

fighting to fundamentally change Washington and to return power to the American people where it really belongs.

We have been doing this against a strong headwind of obstructionists, sometimes from colleagues across the aisle, sometimes from certain in the media more interested in a liberal agenda than in accurate reporting, and sometimes from embedded bureaucrats and special interests within the government industrial complex who really don't want to see the Washington swamp drained. But in spite of that, we are succeeding.

□ 1700

And while many of these conservative winds have gone unreported and, therefore, flown under the radar, the truth is that we are indeed steering the ship in the right direction, we are steadily undoing the damage done by out-of-touch policies by the Obama administration.

Case in point is a fact that has not garnered a lot of headlines, but should have, something that Congressman WALKER pointed out earlier: the fact that in the first 100 days of this 115th Congress, we have passed more bills—158 to be exact—than were passed during the first 100 days of any and all of the four prior administrations: the Obama, Bush, Clinton, and H.W. Bush administrations. And as proof of our productivity, we have signed more of those bills into law than in any of the other administrations' first 100 days as well.

But it is not just the quantity of the bills that we are turning into laws. It is about the quality and the substance. We are passing legislation that is making government smaller. We are passing legislation that is making government less costly. We are passing legislation that is making the government finally more accountable to the people. We are dismantling the enormous bureaucratic overgrowth and underbrush that spun out of control under former President Obama.

As a former prosecutor, I believe you have got to win your case with verifiable facts and evidence, so let me give you some. In the last 20 years, prior Congresses have successfully used the Congressional Review Act one time. Just once in the prior 20 years has Congress used the CRA to undo midnight regulations passed at the 12th hour in the dead of night as administrations were walking out the door. But in the first 4 months of this Congress, Republicans have united to use the CRA 14 times to overturn 14 of President Obama's most harmful midnight regulations, and in so doing, we have saved the American people, the United States taxpayers, billions of dollars in the process.

Now we are in the process of finally saving America from arguably the most disastrous piece of legislation in our Nation's history: ObamaCare.

If anyone needs any further evidence of its implosion into a death spiral,

just yesterday CMS announced that 2 million Americans dropped off of the ObamaCare exchanges in just the first 3 months of this year.

The ObamaCare house is on fire, and rather than waiting for it to burn to the ground with American families still inside, Republicans in the peoples' House have acted now. Republicans won't let Americans suffer in the face of such inevitable continuing adversity when it comes to our healthcare. So as ObamaCare continues to dissolve in front of our eyes, we have already taken action by sending an ObamaCare repeal bill over to the Senate.

All of this work makes me incredibly optimistic about the results that we are continuing to deliver on the people's behalf, just as we did again last week when we passed a House bill that tackles a key issue that I have been sounding the alarm about since my first day in Congress: ending the reckless overreach of ELIZABETH WARREN's Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

I was so grateful for the opportunity to support the House's passage of my fellow Texan, JEB HENSARLING's, Financial CHOICE Act last week, which puts an end to the days of the Obama-era CFPB as we know it, because the Financial CHOICE Act legislation converts the CFPB into the Consumer Law Enforcement Agency, which is tasked with promoting competition rather than stifling it, tasked with enhancing consumer choice rather than eliminating it, all the while ensuring congressional oversight that has been missing for far too long.

Mr. Speaker, every Federal agency needs to have someone grading its paper, and the Financial CHOICE Act will allow the CFPB's paper to be graded for the very first time.

I am incredibly excited about the economic opportunities that our Nation is going to continue to be afforded as we continue here to wipe away President Obama's sweeping government mandates and regulations so we can get our country back on track and back working for all Americans.

There is a lot more to be done to ensure that America's brightest days truly are ahead of us, but with so many committed conservatives as we have here tonight, I am optimistic that we are going to continue to deliver results for the people here in what finally, once again, can be appropriately referred to as the peoples' House.

Mr. WALKER. I thank Representative RATCLIFFE for his comments.

Mr. Speaker, once again, if people are watching at home or are gathering here today, I want to remind them that, many times—Members of Congress, when you go back home, you hear a lot of times: Do your job; get things done.

And as I reflect your attention again to our chart here this evening, we can talk a little bit about what we have passed in the House: 158, the most in several different administrations.

However, even though we are going to talk tonight a little about what we have done and what we look forward to, we are not stopping with 158, we are not stopping with the 37 that have been signed into law. We are looking forward to doing some new things.

I think one of the best people to talk about something that we are excited about is certainly somebody that I call a friend, a fellow member, a colleague from North Carolina, someone who allows me to tag along into NASCAR country from time to time, a real friend of the people, someone who I have learned that will tell you the truth no matter what you ask. It is my privilege to yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HUDSON).

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman very much for yielding. I thank the chairman also for organizing, once again, an opportunity for us to speak directly to the American people, and for his tremendous leadership on the values that we conservatives hold very dear.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about a piece of legislation tonight that we plan to bring to the floor of the House this fall. The right to defend yourself doesn't end when you cross State lines, which is where my Concealed Reciprocity Act of 2017, also known as H.R. 38, comes into play. We currently have 196 cosponsors from both sides of the aisle.

My bill simply provides law-abiding citizens the right to carry concealed and travel freely between States without worrying about conflicted concealed carry State codes or onerous civil suits.

As it stands, the patchwork of agreements is confusing for even the most cautious concealed-carry permit holder, and it has caused law-abiding citizens, like Shaneen Allen, a single mother from New Jersey, to unwittingly break the law and suffer arrest and detention.

Now, the Constitution's very clear. If you look at Article IV, section 1, it says: "Full Faith and Credit shall be given in each State to the public Acts, Records, and judicial Proceedings of every other State. . . ."

That is why a driver's license is recognized in other States. That is why a marriage license is recognized in other States. That is why divorce proceedings are recognized in other States; in the same way the concealed-carry permit or the right to carry concealed should be recognized.

In the Senate, Senator JOHN CORNYN introduced companion legislation. Senator CORNYN has long been a champion for our Second Amendment rights, and I am pleased to work with him as he continues his strong leadership on national concealed carry reciprocity.

I have already received a tremendous amount of support from my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who recognize our constitutional right to keep and bear arms. However, the left continues to spread misinformation and employ

fear tactics about this bill, erroneously saying it will increase crime and arm criminals.

First of all, under this law, an individual who travels to a different State has to follow the laws of that State. In the same way with a driver's license, when you drive into another State, they recognize that you are a legal driver, but you have got to follow their laws.

Second, every single person who wants to buy a firearm still has to go through the Federal background check. My bill does nothing to change that.

Further, statistics have shown that violent crime has decreased as gun ownership and concealed-carry permits have increased. Since 1991, 25 States have adopted right-to-carry laws. The number of people with carry permits has risen to over 12 million people, and the Nation's violent crime rate has decreased 51 percent.

Also, if a criminal with malice intent wants to get a gun, I can guarantee you that he or she isn't worried about following the laws that are on the books. Unfortunately, we can't change that, but we can ensure that law-abiding citizens can legally carry concealed firearms to defend themselves.

As a shock to no one, big city liberal Michael Bloomberg has promised to spend \$25 million to stop this legislation. He could spend all the money he wants, but our gun rights are not for sale.

With a groundswell of support from Americans across the country and a pro-Second Amendment President, we will make national concealed carry reciprocity a reality this Congress. More and more States are recognizing the rights of law-abiding citizens to carry a concealed handgun without permission from government, including two this year, bringing that total to 12.

In my home State of North Carolina, lawmakers in the House voted in favor of House bill 746 to make a concealed-carry permit no longer necessary in locations where it is currently permissible to openly carry a handgun. It is a commonsense bill. I am proud of the leadership of the folks in Raleigh. It just demonstrates that all across this country, the American people are recognizing that our right to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.

So I would just offer this very simple piece of legislation, following the Constitution that says a law-abiding citizen trying to do the right thing is not going to be criminalized because they have crossed an invisible line in the ground.

I am pleased to be here today to talk about it, and I am thankful for having this opportunity and support.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative HUDSON for his passion about that.

Speaking of passion, in the 2½ years that I have served in the United States Congress, there are Members who work on different projects, different concerns, different issues. I will tell you

someone who I have really grown to love and appreciate, someone who has lived it out on the battlefield as he has worked to literally put veterans back together as a surgeon on the battlefield, someone who understands and has worked well into the life arena, and that is Dr. BRAD WENSTRUP, a fellow steering committee member on the Republican Steering Committee.

Without further ado, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio, Dr. WENSTRUP, to please share what is on his heart today.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding, and I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this.

You know, as a physician, we take an oath. We say: Do no harm.

And today in America and here in Washington, D.C., we are debating physician-assisted suicide, where we are authorizing physicians to take someone's life—to assist in taking someone's life. To me, this undermines the very thing that healthcare is all about.

Who is most affected in this situation?

Our most vulnerable citizens: the disabled and the poor.

As a doctor, I can tell you, what has always been in my heart is this is about care and about comfort, and those are our priorities.

Physician-assisted suicide does not provide comfort. It merely ends life.

In Washington, D.C., a doctor can decide that you may be going to die within 6 months if you have a terminal disease—a terminal disease if you are untreated. Many terminal diseases would be terminal if they are not treated. With that, the doctor can write a prescription. There is no tracking of that prescription once it is given and there is no witness of the patient taking this prescription. They can simply go home to die alone.

In one State where there is physician-assisted suicide, they have had an increase in suicides outside of physician-assisted suicides. I think that what we are saying to too many people is: You are not needed.

Again, this undermines what I think we are all about and what healthcare should be all about.

I think of the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life," which so many people watch every Christmastime. Mr. Potter says to George Bailey: "George, you are worth more dead than alive."

Is that really who we want to be?

As a resident in Chicago in the 1980s, one of our responsibilities was to do physical exams on everyone admitted to the hospital regardless of what they were admitted for. I can remember a doctor coming up to me and saying: We just admitted our first AIDS patient, but you don't have to go see him.

And this is a time when people didn't know what was going on, what was causing this, how it was being spread. And I thought that was wrong and I went in anyway to examine this patient. I had to go in like it was a lunar

landing because there was so much uncertainty about what was causing death to so many people. This patient was very sick. I learned so much from this one patient because there were so many things wrong, but it didn't compare to what I learned when I finished that exam and he looked at me and said: You just examined me more than anyone.

□ 1715

I have never forgotten, throughout my entire medical career, the value of human life and what it must feel like to be discarded. He died the next day. I still know his name. And he taught me a valuable lesson on his very last day of life: Healthcare is about cures, it is about caring, it is about compassion, and society should be about the same thing, and the ideal that every person has value until their very last breath.

I am pleased to say that the President's budget addresses this issue, and we will, too, here in the House because you and your loved ones matter.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative WENSTRUP. I appreciate his passionate plea.

Speaking of life, one of the most outstanding voices that I have gotten a chance to meet, someone who, without compromise, unashamedly talks about the value and the worth of an unborn child is Representative TRENT FRANKS from Arizona. He is here today to talk about a future bill, hopefully one that we can add to this total of 37 in the not too distant future.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS), someone who is a warrior in Congress.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. WALKER for this opportunity.

It is so appropriate on People's Night to talk about the very littlest people in America, isn't it?

Mr. Speaker, the United States of America is a unique nation that is premised on that bedrock foundation that we are all created equal, and that each of us is endowed by our Creator with the unalienable right to live.

That is why it is so important for Members of Congress to remind ourselves from time to time that protecting the lives of all Americans and their constitutional rights is why we are really all here. It is our sworn oath before God and the people of this Nation.

Yet today, a great shadow looms over America. More than 18,000 late-term abortions, very late-term abortions, are occurring in America every year, placing the mothers at exponentially greater risk and subjecting their pain-capable unborn babies to torture and death without anesthesia—this, in the land of the free and the home of the brave. It is the greatest human rights atrocity in the United States today.

Almost every other major civilized nation on Earth protects pain-capable unborn babies at this stage, and every

credible poll of the American people shows that they are overwhelmingly in favor of protecting them. Yet we have given these little babies less legal protection from unnecessary cruelty than the protection we have given farm animals under the Federal Humane Slaughter Act.

But thankfully, Mr. Speaker, the winds of change have finally begun to blow, and the tide of blindness and blood is finally turning in America. The Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act has already once passed in this body, and it will again, Mr. Speaker; and these little babies now have a new and very powerful friend and protector in President Donald J. Trump.

No matter how it is shouted down or what distortions, deception what-ifs, distractions, diversions, gotchas, twisting of words, changing the subject, or blatant falsehoods the abortion industry hurls at this bill and its supporters, it will remain a deeply sincere effort, beginning at the sixth month of pregnancy, to protect both mothers and their pain-capable unborn babies from this torturous atrocity of late-term abortion on demand. Ultimately, it is one all humane Americans can support if they truly understand it for themselves.

So the question that now remains is whether the Republican leader in the Senate will find the courage to prevent pro-abortion Democrats from once again using the Senate filibuster to prevent this bill from even coming to the floor in the Senate for debate.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for all Americans to open our eyes and our souls and recognize the humanity of these helpless little babies and the inhumanity of what is being done to them. Protecting these little children of God and their mothers is not a Republican issue; it is not a Democratic issue; it is a decisive test of our own humanity and who we are as a human family.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative FRANKS as he continues to stand year after year in fighting and standing up for the unborn child.

Many times you get to meet some wonderful people here in the United States Congress. And someone asked me the other day: Who is a strong Member? Who is someone who is willing to stand up?

I guess they might have thought I would have said the Speaker or the majority leader, as well they do in their own right. When I think of somebody willing to engage, it is the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK). She is not just known in the Sixth District; she is known throughout all of Tennessee as far as being willing to stand up for those who cannot stand up and protect themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK).

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WALKER), my colleague and friend, the chair of the RSC, for hosting this Special Order tonight to highlight

some of the recent victories that this Republican-controlled Congress has secured to ensure that every American enjoys freedom and opportunity for which our Nation was founded.

I rise today to thank my colleagues in the House and the Senate for passing my resolution of disapproval, H.J. Res. 43, which used the authority of the Congressional Review Act to overturn the Obama administration's eleventh hour rule forcing States like mine, Tennessee, to fund abortion providers.

Mr. Speaker, I also rise to thank Vice President MIKE PENCE, who cast that tie-breaking vote in the Senate. Tennesseans appreciate his courageous leadership.

Now, abortion is not healthcare, and vulnerable women seeking true comprehensive care deserve better than abortion-centric facilities like Planned Parenthood.

For over 45 years, States like Tennessee had the authority to direct their family planning funds to the healthcare providers that best suited their needs. Yes, they had that decision to decide what is best for their unique communities. Sadly, in a parting gift to the abortion industry, President Obama stole this freedom and flexibility and forced his own political agenda on States across the country like my very own State of Tennessee.

While I am unapologetically pro-life, this bill is simply about states' rights.

Mr. Speaker, when President Trump signed this bill, he put the American people, not the bureaucrats here in Washington, back in the driver's seat of empowering States like Tennessee to steer their title X dollars away from abortion-centric facilities like Planned Parenthood and to give the right back to the State to make that decision about which facilities provide the most comprehensive care for women in their State.

It was an honor to work with Senator ERNST and the pro-life community to help this life-affirming legislation reach the President's desk.

Mr. Speaker, I want to once again thank President Trump for his leadership on this matter.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairwoman BLACK.

When we talk about what is getting done, I want to remind our audience this evening, Mr. Speaker, that our President, even without a full Cabinet, has been busy taking time to make sure that what the House and the Senate are sending him is being signed into law.

As you can see on my chart this evening, 37, that is the most. You have to go back. In fact, the last four Presidents haven't equalled that total. And 158 bills from the House have been passed.

One of the things that has been promised by this administration and by Members of Congress is to make sure that we are doing everything we can to take care of a very important segment of our population, and that is our veterans.

It wasn't long after I arrived 2½ years ago that I had a chance to meet someone. Now, as a former pastor, you can always tell the character and integrity of someone when they have gone through a hardship.

I met Dr. PHIL ROE after he had lost a loved one in his life. He could have gone home, but he had a mission to complete, and that is to stand up for those veterans who needed standing up. A former physician himself, he was willing to come back and continue to fight. What a privilege it is to serve with the chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Dr. PHIL ROE.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE).

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. WALKER for yielding.

I would like to associate my remarks with Mr. HUDSON, Dr. WENSTRUP, Mr. FRANKS, and my good friend DIANE BLACK.

I am a concealed carry permit holder—full disclosure—and what Mr. FRANKS said: I am an OB/GYN doctor by training. I have delivered 5,000 babies in my lifetime, and every single one of them I view as valuable. I have watched these young people that I have delivered grow up and become very productive citizens not only in my community, but around the country.

Mr. Speaker, 44 years ago, I was a young soldier in southeast Asia. When we came home from the military, we were advised not to wear our uniforms when we traveled because of basically what was going on in the country: the opposition to the Vietnam war. That left a very deep, indelible mark on me, and I thought that is no way we should be treating our men and women who protected us and gave us the freedoms that we have and live by to this day.

When I got the privilege of being elected—when I retired from my medical practice in northeast Tennessee and ran for Congress and was fortunate enough to win—I was asked to be on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, which I have served on for the past 8 years.

We know that 3 years ago there was a scandal in Phoenix, Arizona. Then we realized it was not just Phoenix, Arizona. It was all across the country where veterans were not being served, and, actually, veterans were dying while they were waiting for care at a VA. That is as wrong as it gets.

So, what we elected to do in our committee, when we discovered this, was to try to get some legislation up that actually did something about this. And one of the things that touched me—I watched late into the evening, like many of you all probably around the country and in this gallery watched—was the election results. It was around 3 or 3:30 in the morning when then President-elect Trump gave his election speech.

Very shortly into it, not a minute or two into that speech, he mentioned our veterans. And it really, really encour-

aged me because I think he is an administration that is very sincere in improving care.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is not money. When I came here in 2009, you, the taxpayers, were spending about \$97 billion on VA care, on benefits, and on cemeteries. Today, that number is going to be \$186 billion. We have gone from 260,000 employees in the VA to over 360,000 employees. There is enough money and personnel to take care of the problems.

When the President was sworn in and he selected his Secretary of the VA, Dr. David Shulkin—I believe is now the man for the job—he was approved 100–0 by the Senate. Dr. Shulkin said: The first thing I need is accountability legislation that allows me to terminate bad employees.

At the VA, the vast majority—and many of them are personal friends of mine that I have worked with in healthcare—are good people taking the very best care they can of veterans. But there are some bad apples there, and they cannot be terminated. It almost could not happen, Mr. Speaker.

So what this legislation does is it protects the whistleblowers who call these people out. It provides due process rights for employees so that they don't have those trampled on, but it allows the Secretary to terminate these bad apples and, hopefully, improve the morale of the entire VA. This is only phase one.

We also have passed out of this body and over to the Senate—I want to thank our Senate colleagues, Senator ISAKSON; Senator RUBIO, who is a lead sponsor in the Senate; and Senator TESTER, the minority leader. I also want to thank the minority leader on our side of the aisle, Sergeant Major Walz, who worked hand in hand. This was a bipartisan bill, which is how legislation should be passed. We passed it in the House and it went to the Senate. They reformed the bill. It came back, and we now await the President's signature.

We are also doing repeals reform. We passed that out of here. We have, now, 470,000 backlog claims of veterans waiting for their appeals. Hopefully, we are going to address this problem.

The Secretary, we have just extended the Choice Program for veterans who want to choose care outside of the VA, and also a new electronic health system. So we have a lot of work to do.

It is a true privilege to do what I get to do, which is to help the 21 million men and women who have served this country, who allow us to be free.

I thank the gentleman for the privilege to be down here tonight to share this with the American people.

□ 1730

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman ROE and appreciate his continued service. It is a privilege to certainly work with him in the House.

One of our newest Members who came in the 115th class, a gentleman by

the name of JIM BANKS—in fact, he is the only new Member serving on the Republican Steering Committee. Some would describe him as a quick study, I guess, but he is here this evening to specifically talk about continued VA accountability and the Department of Defense readiness.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BANKS).

Mr. BANKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his leadership of the Republican Study Committee. It is one of the great honors that I have in this Congress to serve with him and others to advocate for conservative principles to move our country forward.

With a new Republican administration, many of the innovative ideas coming from this House now have a chance to become law and achieve real results for the American people. The contrast between this administration and the last one is most clear when it comes to prioritizing readiness for our Department of Defense and caring for our veterans.

As those veterans in Congress know firsthand, shortchanging readiness on the front end will have long-term implications in the years that follow.

We have the moral imperative to ensure that our young men and women who go into harm's way are never in a fair fight. We have an obligation to ensure that our forces are the best-trained, best-equipped, and best-led fighting force in the world. This obligation starts with prioritizing a stable and predictable budget and appropriations process.

Our leaders in the Department of Defense must be able to forecast and anticipate training needs, and that means ending the trend of continuing resolutions that offer neither good fiscal discipline nor the ability to plan that our military leaders desperately need.

Consider that two-thirds of our Army are not ready to deploy. Our Navy is smaller than it has been in 99 years, and our Air Force is the smallest ever and losing pilots at an alarming rate. These are not the marks of a ready force, and the work to rebuild must begin right now.

However, it is important to look at prioritizing the needs of our servicemembers holistically. Just as we would not send them into harm's way without the training they need, we have an obligation to care for the injuries they sustained when they return home. Our veterans deserve and have earned the highest quality of care and to have that care delivered in a timely and efficient manner.

Unfortunately, too often the VA does not have the power to remove substandard employees who are failing our veterans. The overwhelming majority of VA employees are hardworking and dedicated to their jobs, and it is simply not fair to these employees that the VA cannot hold substandard employees accountable.

But with a Republican President in the White House, our veterans will fi-

nally see real accountability in the VA with passage of the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act. With passage of this bill, there will be a new and expedited process to remove employees who are failing to properly serve our veterans, while maintaining the due process rights of VA workers, as well as their right to appeal.

It would also implement stronger protections for whistleblowers, ensuring that no employee is intimidated into silence.

Mr. Speaker, we now have a chance to make sure our Armed Forces have the means to protect our country and ensure all veterans receive the quality of care they deserve.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative BANKS, and I appreciate this is such an important issue that he is battling.

Once again, this evening, Mr. Speaker, we are reminding that tonight is the People's Night here in the people's House. We are focusing in on the work of the Members of Congress.

As you can see in our chart this evening, 158 bills have been passed through Congress. So many times we continue to hear: What is Congress working on?

Well, not only have we passed these 158, we are still working on passing things in the future.

One of the great Members from South Carolina, Mr. JEFF DUNCAN, is someone who has a genuine heart and passion for others, but also has a wonderful heart for the outdoors, as he is currently chairman of the Sportsmen's Caucus.

Without further ado, I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. DUNCAN).

Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina.

I want to talk to America today about the Hearing Protection Act. Consequences of firearms exposure: Noise-induced hearing loss is a major health problem for hunters and recreational shooters.

Now, I started hunting at an early age with my father; and in the field and hunting activities, I learned a lot about life, a lot about myself. Most importantly, I got time to spend with my father, who has now passed away.

But we enjoyed the outdoors generally in the shooting sports, whether that was over a brace of bird dogs, quail hunting, shooting doves, hunting ducks, or deer hunting. And I can tell you, with my own experience, that firing multiple firearms—shotguns, rifles, handguns—risks your hearing health.

Men and women in our United States military experience hearing loss or tinnitus. That is a large expenditure for the VA. Tinnitus accounts for around 1.45 million disability-related instances for veterans. The most prevalent disability compensations are based on that.

So what can we do about it?

Well, there is an apparatus, a firearm accessory, that you can add to a firearm to muffle or suppress that sound. It is commonly called a suppressor or a silencer, but it does anything but silence a weapon.

America, you need to realize that Hollywood has glorified suppressors for firearms. You can see it in your mind—James Bond taking out his concealed weapon that he couldn't conceal with a suppressor on it because the suppressor adds another 8 inches to the length of the barrel—screwing the suppressor on to commit a crime.

Hollywood has made you believe that that suppressor silences that weapon when, in actuality, a suppressor on any sort of firearm drops the decibels about 30 decibels. Most firearms would be louder than a jackhammer, and no one would say that a jackhammer is silent.

So we have got a bill that would allow suppressors to be sold, like they are sold in Europe, but with a little more American restrictions. In Europe, as restrictive as their gun laws are, you can go to the hardware store and buy a suppressor across the counter, just like you could buy a scope, a sling, or a magazine for a deer rifle. It is gentlemanly to hunt or shoot in Europe with a suppressed weapon to keep the sound down, but it doesn't silence it, as we mentioned before.

Depending on the caliber of ammunition, a typical hunting rifle is 160 to 180 decibels—suppressed would be about 125 to 145 decibels.

The bill we have would allow you to go in and purchase a suppressor from your Federal firearm license-holder, do a background check, just like you have to go through to purchase the firearm itself—background check, and purchase a suppressor to help the hunting and the hearing health of the hunters and the shooting sports enthusiasts across the country.

I hope we can get this bill passed to help the hearing health of so many people in America and dispel all the rumors. I thank the gentleman for letting us speak to the American people tonight.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative DUNCAN.

Many times in Congress you hear sometimes maybe big words or crazy words, words like "appropriations" or "appropriators." We have one of those appropriators with us tonight, a strong conservative from the State of Georgia, my friend, Representative TOM GRAVES, who is going to talk a little bit about his proposal and an idea that I believe helps us continue adding to this number of 158.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GRAVES).

Mr. GRAVES of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I could not be more excited to be here tonight and to experience what we are experiencing here.

You know, when this President was elected, he made a promise: He was going to drain the swamp, he was going to shake things up, and he was going to make government work again.

I have got to highlight real quickly though, before I talk about appropriations, what really has happened. Here in the last—in this under 5 months, 600,000 new jobs have been created. Unemployment is at the lowest it has been in nearly a decade, at 4.3 percent. He has put a plan forth to help rescue Americans from a healthcare plan that has been failing.

The largest increase in defense spending in nearly 10 years has already been passed and signed into law and is part of your display there.

He has presented a budget to this Congress that balances in 10 years, rebuilds our military, reforms our Tax Code, and empowers the taxpayers, while not empowering government.

And he has also put the American people and the American workers and American businesses first by pulling us out of that Paris accord. He has been shaking things up and draining the swamp.

So what is next? For us, it is, we have got to reform this appropriations process.

Let me read you some statistics here. The current process that we operate under to fund the greatest Nation on the globe has only worked four times in the last 40 years. The last time we passed all 12 appropriations bills that were enacted by the start of the new fiscal year was in 1996 is the last time.

And, in fact, a more stunning statistic: Since 2009, not one appropriations bill has passed this House, passed the Senate, and been signed into law by the President before its time was due. That is zero for 96.

So I have just got a simple idea, a simple concept. Let's just change what is not working. Let's change the process. Let's design a process that actually works for the American people and funds the government in a very responsible, fiscally responsible way that begins streamlining government; that is eliminating agencies; that is empowering the American people; and, ultimately, showing a responsible House of Representatives and a Republican vision forward.

And it is real simple. Let's run it through the committee. Let's do 12 bills, all through their different subcommittees. Let's combine them in full committee, and let's bring them to the House floor for everybody to have an opportunity to vote on, to amend, to engage in the debate.

I believe, if we do this, we are going to save time. We are going to have more time for tax reform. We are going to have more time for infrastructure investment. We are going to have more time for finishing out the healthcare bill. But it is going to be transparent. Everyone can see it. It is going to be effective. We are going to get it done.

At the end of the day, we are going to be able to rebuild our military to where we know it needs to be. We are going to be able to secure our border. We are going to protect the innocent unborn. We are going to reform Wall

Street. We are going to invest in roads and infrastructure. We are going to streamline or eliminate a lot of agencies, and we are going to do all that while cutting spending. But that is only if we are willing to make government work again.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative GRAVES.

It doesn't take you long, around the Halls of Congress, to see someone who has a genuine heart for service, someone who can quickly give up his chair, or someone who sees someone that is without. Sometimes I think that is a person who has served in faith many years, and sometimes I just think that is part of the natural tendency of a person who certainly has a heart, not only for God but to serve others.

I can think of nobody who better fits that description than our chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, here to talk a little bit about his passion and his vision for tax reform.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY).

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative WALKER. And first let me thank him for not just hosting this evening, People's Night, but his leadership of the Republican Study Committee and how he is leading our efforts to truly move this country back in the right direction.

As a friend, and from someone who admires him so much, I thank him for his leadership. It has already made a huge difference in issues like repealing ObamaCare.

So how many of you are pleased with the way you are taxed in America? Not many Americans are because the code we have got, it is so complex and so costly, it is just unfair.

So House Republicans are working with this President and the Senate to deliver the first pro-growth tax reform in a generation. We know this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and the goals we set out from the House is, first, we want a Tax Code not designed merely to wring money from you. We have that Tax Code. We want a Tax Code built for growth, designed to grow jobs, your wages, and the U.S. economy.

In doing that, we want to leapfrog America from nearly dead last among our global competitors back into the lead pack as the best place on this Earth for that next new job, that next new investment.

What we propose is a Tax Code with three big reforms: The lowest rates for our local businesses in modern history, and redesigned so our local companies can compete and win anywhere in the world, especially here at home.

Secondly, we are proposing for families and individuals a code so fair and simple that 9 out of 10 Americans will be able to file using a simple postcard system, and it works.

And the final reform is because we propose a much fairer and simpler Tax Code; we propose a fairer and simpler tax collector.

□ 1745

So we proposed to bust up the IRS and redesign it into a 21st century agency focused on you, the taxpayer. These are the reforms included in the House Republican blueprint. We are excited to work with President Trump and the Senate to deliver on pro-growth tax reform, bold, that leapfrogs America back to the front and returns jobs back to the United States—manufacturing, research and headquarters jobs.

It is a tough challenge. We will need your input. I encourage you to come to the Ways and Means Committee website, learn more, speak out, be part of changing and reforming this horrible Tax Code.

Mr. WALKER, thank you again for your leadership of this Special Order and our efforts.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman BRADY for his comments. It is an honor to have him with us this evening.

We have talked a little bit about veterans tonight. Former veteran, chaplain, and pastor, Representative COLLINS, we would love for you to talk about something that is part of that 158 pieces of legislation that has been passed, what we called the REINS Act.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS).

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman WALKER for yielding, and I appreciate him offering this. It is providing a different take that we are not getting in the meeting anywhere.

Go back real quickly: a few months ago, the first week of the session, the House comes in and does what it promised. It says it is going to take on regulatory reform. It is going to take on the burdens, and one of the first bills out of the chute was the REINS Act.

The REINS Act is very simple. It has a \$100 million impact on the economy. It comes back to the people's House, into the Senate for approval. Instead of bureaucrats in cubicles down the street thinking they know what is best for our districts and for our country, it is back to the people that were elected.

You see, when it was first brought up, they said: Well, this is going to put a burden on our bureaucrats, our government workers. They are doing all these things.

Well, if they want to run for Congress, then pay the fee and run for Congress.

The REINS Act puts it back where it is supposed to be. This is an accomplishment that I am proud of. The Senate just recently passed their version. This is something that President Trump has said he would sign. This is about moving forward on the promises we have.

Congressman WALKER does a great job highlighting where we have been and where we are going. This is a promise kept. If anybody wants to know what the American agenda looks like, look to the Republican majority, look to the past 5 months. And all I can say

is that the promises are being kept, and there is more to come.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative COLLINS for his comments.

As we continue to talk about some of the things that have been accomplished and also things that we are looking forward to, it is a wonderful opportunity to introduce my friend, Representative JODY HICE from the great State of Georgia, a fellow former pastor who still enjoys those opportunities, I am sure, when you have a few. But tonight I want him to talk about the Free Speech Fairness Act.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JODY B. HICE).

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. It is an honor to be here with you.

I think by this time most people are familiar, at least they have heard about the Johnson amendment. It came about in 1954, when Lyndon Johnson barely won a race for Senate because many people thought he was soft on communism. So one of the first things he did when he got here was, behind closed doors, without any vetting, without any debate, had inserted into the IRS Code a statement that basically says that nonprofits cannot address political issues, or they could potentially lose their tax-exempt status.

That now, for 60 years-plus, has become a target for pastors, for churches, for nonprofits using tax-exempt status as leverage to prevent them from speaking, addressing political issues. It is political correctness at its worst.

When our government becomes the gatekeeper of free speech, then we actually have no free speech at all. And in this process, they also are influencing what religious institutions can and cannot be.

Our Founders believed that our country should not establish a State church. They also believe that government should not dictate the religious practices of its citizens, or abridge the free speech of Houses of worship. That is what is taking place.

As a result of this, my good friend, Whip STEVE SCALISE, and I introduced H.R. 781, the Free Speech Fairness Act, which creates a carve-out for 501(c)(3) organizations to address political discourse as long as it is within the normal course of business with de minimis associated expenses. I am pleased that the President has also been extremely vocal on this issue, but we really need this codified because the unfairness must stop.

I know our time is running short, but I urge our colleagues to support this, and I deeply appreciate the gentleman providing me the opportunity to speak on this Johnson amendment.

Mr. WALKER. I thank Representative HICE and I appreciate his courage in being willing to stand and speak out.

My great friend, Representative GARY PALMER, from the home of the University, Crimson Tide Alabama

football, great to have you here tonight talking about a very important issue, the Agency Accountability Act.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PALMER), who will close us out this evening.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman WALKER for arranging this Special Order.

Looking ahead, H.R. 850, the Agency Accountability Act, would be a game changer for government run amuck. In 2015, Federal agencies collected over \$530 billion—that is billion dollars—in fees, fines, and other revenue independent of the appropriations process.

Article I, section 9, clause 7 of the Constitution grants Congress the power of the purse. This assigns to Congress the role of final arbiter of the use of public funds. Allowing agencies to have slush funds outside of the normal appropriations process is a recipe for bad acting.

For instance, during the Obama administration, the Department of Justice would send money collected through fees and settlements to political activist groups aligned with the administration policies; many times in contradiction to Congress' will. Nearly 15 percent of the Department of Justice's entire budget is from alternative funding sources, not Congress. However, DOJ isn't a lone wolf.

The Department of Labor has raised over \$1.3 billion from fines and fees and the Environmental Protection Agency collected over \$600 million, just to name a few.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. PALMER and all the Members for coming out this evening and listening to our presentation on the passage of 158 bills.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1215, PROTECTING ACCESS TO CARE ACT OF 2017

Mr. BURGESS (during the Special Order of Mr. WALKER) from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 115-179) on the resolution (H. Res. 382) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1215) to improve patient access to health care services and provide improved medical care by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the health care delivery system, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RUTHERFORD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PALMER) to finish his statement.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding and allowing me to complete my remarks on this Special Order organized by Congressman WALKER.

As I was saying, if you recall the 2014 debate over funding for the Department of Homeland Security, the Obama administration made it clear that they would contravene the will of Congress with regard to President Obama's amnesty order and would fund his amnesty program using fines and fees.

The Department of Homeland Security had over \$400 million that the Department could spend outside of what Congress appropriated. It is unacceptable for agencies to ignore the will of Congress by funding programs outside of the typical appropriations process.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau gets all of its funding outside of Congress through transfers from the Federal Reserve and from fines imposed on financial institutions. The CFPB does not get one dime appropriated from Congress, meaning they are not subject to congressional oversight. When it comes to the CFPB, Congress has no power of the purse to ensure that that agency is accountable to Congress.

One of the top priorities in the Republican Better Way agenda is our commitment to reclaim our Article I authority. The Agency Accountability Act would direct all fines, fees, and settlements to the Treasury, making them subject to the normal appropriations process. This would end the unconstitutional slush funds that allow programs to operate independently and outside the purview of Congress. Most importantly, it would allow for Congress to fully account for how much money the government actually collects and where that money is coming from. The House should take up the Agency Accountability Act and pass it.

Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank my friend for pointing out the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

One thing about that group, when I was a judge, or assistant DA, if you needed somebody's banking records, then you would have to get sworn evidence—normally in affidavit form—and take it to a judge, and there had to be sufficient detail in the affidavit to establish—again, under oath—that a crime had probably been committed and that the person whose banking records we were seeking had probably committed the crime.

If that could be done, then the judge would sign the warrant. Like my years as a judge handling felony cases, there were some warrants I turned down. There is just not enough particularity here. There is not probable cause that this person committed the crime, or I don't see probable cause that a crime was committed. But, normally, law enforcement was good about making sure that probable cause was there, and the DA office would help them.

But the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has come in and it has basically begun to challenge the Internal Revenue Service for acting in the most unconstitutional ways. It may be a toss up now which one uses more unconstitutional authority than the other.

For the CFPB to gather people's financial records when there is no evidence that they committed a crime, no evidence that any crime had been committed—they just gather evidence, purportedly, to make sure nobody is taking advantage of people—well, that is not the way our Constitution works. It is supposed to be that if a bank or a lender takes advantage of an individual, then the individual can complain; then their banking records can be obtained.

But for a governmental entity to just gather people's financial records, it is not just Orwellian; it is outrageous, and it needs to stop. And as my colleague, Mr. PALMER, was pointing out, they have gotten—it was set up back when the Democrats had the majority, and they intentionally set up this governmental entity that would basically be beyond control by the Congress. They intentionally set up a group that could make a living hell for individuals or for banks, for others, because it is the government and it is gathering people's records.

And then along comes—you had ObamaCare get passed. Well, in order to help people, just like the CFPB—and for my liberal friends, that is sarcasm—well, you are going to get everybody's healthcare records, that way the government can help people better because they will have all of their records.

Well, some people, some liberal left-leaning folks would say: Well, we call that helping people. We gather all of their medical records and we gather all of their financial records so we can help them. But those who are Libertarian, Conservative, we don't consider that helping; we consider that abusive, and we don't need it.

□ 1800

One of the great honors and developments since I have been in Congress has been the development of a friendship with just an absolutely great patriotic American. He is a friend of mine, and he has come twice to sit in my seat in the gallery, most recently to hear President Trump deliver a State of the Union Address.

Here is a story by Sean Hannity. It is entitled, "Pull the plug on the Mueller-Comey witch hunt."

It says: "Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation is turning into a witch hunt and it needs to be shut down immediately."

"Ex-FBI Director James Comey, who admitted sparking the probe by leaking information to The New York Times, is nothing more than a calculating, cunning partisan political hack at home in the D.C. swamp. During last week's

hearing, Comey admitted that he intentionally gave a memo to his friend hoping it would lead to appointment of a special counsel.

"I asked a friend of mine to share the content of the memo with a reporter," Comey told lawmakers. "Didn't do it myself for a variety of reasons, but I asked him to because I thought that might prompt the appointment of a special counsel. And so I asked a close friend of mine to do it."

"What Comey is admitting to under oath cannot be overlooked here or understated. His end goal was the appointment of the special counsel, which just so happens to turn out to be his longtime friend, Robert Mueller."

"By leaking information, Comey could be putting himself again in serious legal trouble. If those memos were classified—and several legal experts are arguing they are—Comey may have broken the law. Comey created those memos on government computers in a government truck, making it property of the U.S. Government, not James Comey. In addition to that, there are nondisclosure agreements that the FBI rules that exist that Comey also could have violated."

"Leaks aside, Comey's relationship with Mueller is a massive conflict of interest. It is why it is time to now shut down this political witch hunt that is really aimed at stopping the President, delegitimizing him and hopefully, in the minds of some, making sure he gets thrown out of office. It is that serious."

"We have a guy, Comey, who is beyond disgruntled and angry after being fired by the President and now one of Comey's closest friends is leading the investigation as the special counsel. I don't care if you are left, right, Republican, Democrat, does that sound fair, honest, objective to you? Of course not."

"Conflict of interest rules disqualify Mueller from being special counsel in a case involving his pal. And if that is not bad enough, four members of Mueller's team have donated to Democrats."

"Not to mention, why did James Comey wait until his hearing last week to actually mention the fact that Loretta Lynch, the then-Attorney General, tried to interfere with an FBI investigation? He testified that she instructed him to soft-pedal his investigation by calling it a 'matter.' This on top of her infamous meeting on the tarmac with Bill Clinton."

"The real collusion that Mueller is never going to probe is not with President Trump and the Russians, it appears to be between the Clinton campaign, the Obama administration, Loretta Lynch and James Comey."

And I would add Mueller himself.

"Let's pull the plug on this witch hunt and go after the real lawbreakers."

So that is from FOX News.

Mr. Speaker, it is extraordinary what has come out. I already knew before all of this started that Robert Mueller—a

great patriot who served this country in the Vietnam war, Bronze Star for courage and bravery—but he got into government, and he apparently wanted nothing but yes-men. He wanted yes-men and -women. He didn't want people who had been around for a while that could point out when he had a suggestion that was going to lead to trouble. He would rather have the trouble than have anybody point out such things. So he created a policy he called the 5-year, up-or-out program.

We have FBI offices all over the country and local law enforcement that I have worked with so many times through so many years. And, as people know, you will have bad apples in every crowd, but I would submit that when you are talking about law enforcement, the percentage of bad apples is dramatically lower than you find in the general population at large. We are greatly blessed in that respect. But with all of the massive number of employees with the Department of Justice, Mueller has this 5-year, up-or-out policy.

So if you were in a supervisory position of any kind for 5 years anywhere in the country, then at the end of the 5 years, you had to uproot your wife and your children—your family—and you had to move to Washington and be a minion among minions in the office here at the Department of Justice; or, if you weren't willing to uproot your family in the communities where they had gained so much credibility and were considered such an important part of law enforcement in the area, then you had to get out of the FBI. It is not that you weren't absolutely priceless and invaluable to law enforcement, it is that Bob Mueller did not want your experience where you might ever question him.

So as an article—I believe it was in The Wall Street Journal—years ago pointed out, under his leadership, the FBI lost thousands upon thousands of years of experience. So we keep having people get killed around the country, and people wonder: How did the FBI not pick this up? How did the FBI not recognize this?

Well, I recall when I got out of law school and I was an assistant DA, I would see criminal defense attorneys. I would think in my head—I would know in my head—I knew a whole lot more law than they did. Heck, I had won moot court; won a trip to London, England; at Baylor Law School, I won an award for best brief award—for that I had a partner. I won an award for a Law Review article on torts that I did. Gee, I was coming up against lawyers who hadn't won awards in law school like I had. So I am going: gee, this ought to be pretty easy. They are not near as smart as I am when it comes to the law.

What I learned rather quickly in courtroom work is that knowledge of the law is extremely helpful, but experience is even more helpful: getting a feel and an understanding of human nature, learning to pick up different signs

from people, what they think about different things, when they are holding something back; when you are cross-examining somebody, when to know to keep going or when to know to stop. There are a lot of things you pick up over questioning thousands of people.

Somebody right out of law school that knows every bit of the law is going to have a hard time competing with somebody that has a tremendous amount of experience in the courtroom with human nature.

That is true of law enforcement. I have known law enforcement that just had an incredible knack for just knowing when people were lying. It is amazing to see some of our great law enforcement at work, as I have through my career.

But FBI Director Robert Mueller didn't want them around. After you have been in a supervisory position for 5 years or more, you either come to Washington and take up your little cubicle or get out. Again, Robert Mueller did incalculable damage to the FBI, to its experience, to its ability to root out and find criminals. That experience that he ran off from the FBI was absolutely incalculable. It is just priceless.

He also spent millions on a software program. Many tried to tell him: Wait, you have got us inputting stuff in a system that is not going to work. It doesn't fit our needs.

I don't know if he had some relative there he got it from, why he was so sold on this terrible program. People tried to tell him, but those are the people he wanted out. He didn't want anybody questioning his brilliant intellect.

As a result, they wasted a massive number of hours by FBI employees and wasted the millions that were spent on the program trying to make the program work. Later they had to scrap it. Why? Because he was talked into a bad program, and he wouldn't listen to anybody that tried to tell him about the problems.

We also know that one of the reasons we continue to have people who were on the radar of the FBI—even questioned by the FBI—continue to get away with murder, literally, or be able to commit murder in America and commit terrorism involving murder, is because Robert Mueller tried to make radical Islamists who hate America and who want to overthrow our way of life feel better. So he brought in people to purge our training material in the FBI so that we wouldn't offend radical Islamists who want to kill us.

Michele Bachmann and I reviewed much of the material that was purged. Lynn Westmoreland viewed some of it and he had to go, but it involved hours going through.

Unfortunately—and obviously it was intentional—but the FBI, under Mueller, classified the purged materials so I couldn't have a blowup poster here to show something very important that FBI agents would need in order to understand radical Islam. So they classified that so I can't bring it down here

and show people. Once again, the damage that FBI Director Robert Mueller did to the FBI was basically incalculable. I mentioned before, one of our intelligence guys said: We were blinded of our ability to see our enemy.

We have Robert Mueller to thank, or CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, that is always there to rush in and have a press conference after violence and say: We don't support this kind of violence.

Though, clearly, when the evidence is reviewed, the Council on American-Islamic Relations—individuals involved in CAIR—ultimately wants to see sharia law as the law of the land. There are principals that should have been prosecuted as supporting terrorism.

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There were scores of people that were listed as co-conspirators in supporting terrorism. Instead of pursuing those after the Holy Land Foundation trial convicted the principals involved—I think it was over 100 counts of supporting terrorism—instead of being alerted and being more on his guard, FBI Director Mueller bent over backwards more and more to accommodate those who want to see Sharia law take over America and be the law of the land, scrapping our Constitution.

At one time it was considered treason to want to scrap the Constitution and replace it with anything, but in Bob Mueller's America, people that wouldn't mind seeing the Constitution go away and be replaced by Sharia law, you want to develop an outreach program for those people.

So instead of going to the Boston mosque, where the Tsarnaevs surely had to have indicated and shown signs of being radicalized, Robert Mueller and his FBI went to the mosque as part of an outreach program to make merry and play patty cake with people who could have established, if they were honest, that the Tsarnaev brothers had indeed been radicalized, the information from Russia was correct.

Yet because, under Bob Mueller's leadership, the training materials were purged, FBI agents didn't know what they were looking for. They didn't know what scriptures in the Koran were referred to, were quoted by people who had been radicalized.

They had no idea what to look for in speaking to Kim Jensen, who prepared over 700 pages of training materials so people in the FBI could learn radical Islam. His training materials were banned. They were supposed to have been destroyed, but after it became clear that the FBI could not recognize radical Islamists, that Mueller had done so much damage in regard to training FBI agents, it was finally decided that we kind of need to get somebody back in here and get some materials back in here so maybe we don't keep getting people killed in the country after we are alerted to somebody who has been radicalized as an Islamic terrorist and we let them go because

we don't know they are radicalized because FBI Director Robert Mueller prevented our FBI from being trained to recognize radical Islam.

I know there are some people who—not because they are aware of his virtues, but have heard other people say he is a great guy—just extoll his virtue, not realizing the kind of damage that has been done.

As I mentioned last night, Mr. Speaker, you look at the damage that James Comey and Robert Mueller—really tight friends—have done to the country to an extent I didn't even realize until we started looking at the article by Mollie Hemmingway in *The Federalist*, which is rather breathtaking, and I had no idea until I read that.

According to the article, Comey talked a very fine man, John Ashcroft, into recusing himself so he would not appoint a special prosecutor to find out who leaked the fact that Valerie Plame was a CIA agent. He commits to Ashcroft: Recuse yourself and I will find somebody good.

Mr. Comey likes to talk about conflicts of interest, unless they apply to himself.

So Ashcroft recuses himself, and Mr. Comey, who convinced him to do so, looks high and low: Who could we possibly find to investigate and prosecute whoever it was that leaked information about Valerie Plame? Oh, how about my very dear friend, Patrick Fitzgerald, who happens also to be the Godfather of my child?

So he likes to talk about conflict of interest and chummy relationships, unless they are his chummy relationships, in which case he just puts them in places which appear to be clear conflicts of interest. Which is no surprise that he was supportive and even manipulative in creating what appeared to be a need for a special prosecutor, which actually there was not a need for a special prosecutor at all. He just leaked information. There was a good chance he probably violated the law. He certainly should have violated his FBI employment agreement.

Memos that he prepares as part of his job regarding meetings he had as part of his job, those should belong to the FBI under an employment agreement. I am sure that he has seen Presidents for whom he has worked take their own memos and take them back and use them to write books. Perhaps that is what he is thinking: I will take my memos that I personally prepared and I will be like a President and I will save my memos and use them to write a book.

Of course, it turns out, with regard to this one memo that he wrote about his conversation with President Trump, he consulted with other members of the Justice Department, who all need to be fired, and colluded with them to figure out what should be done.

There is no question these people are smart, or they wouldn't be where they were. They knew that if there was an obstruction of justice in which Trump

had engaged, then they would have to report it. Failing to report it would be a crime. They didn't. So we know there was no crime. What we know is they were conspiring and colluding to hurt the President of the United States.

So we don't need a special prosecutor. We certainly don't need Mueller. He has done enough damage. It is time to let the special prosecutor go that Comey needlessly created.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. GRIFFITH (at the request of Mr. MCCARTHY) for today on account of family matters.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 6 o'clock and 23 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, June 14, 2017, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1628. A letter from the Acting Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crops Program, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's interim rule — Sweet Onions Grown in the Walla Walla Valley of Southeast Washington and Northeast Oregon; Decreased Assessment Rate [Docket No.: AMS-SC-16-0116; SC17-956-1 IR] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1629. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crops Program, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's affirmation of interim rule as final rule — Almonds Grown in California; Change in Quality Control Requirements [Docket No.: AMS-SC-16-0047; SC16-981-3 FIR] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1630. A letter from the Acting Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crops Program, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Tomatoes Grown in Florida; Increased Assessment Rate [Docket No.: AMS-SC-16-0088; SC16-966-1 FR] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1631. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's Major final rule — National Organic Program (NOP); Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices [Docket No.: AMS-NOP-15-0012; NOP-15-06 FR] (RIN: 0581-AD44) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1632. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Triclopyr; Pesticide Tolerances for Emergency Exemptions [EPA-HQ-OPP-2017-0036; FRL-9961-29] received June 7, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1633. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Department of Defense, transmitting a notification of an increase in the Program Acquisition Unit Cost for the Chemical Demilitarization — Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives program, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2433(d)(3); Public Law 97-252, Sec. 1107(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 110-417, Sec. 811(c)); (122 Stat. 4522); to the Committee on Armed Services.

1634. A letter from the Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting the semiannual report titled, "Acceptance of Contributions For Defense Programs, Projects, and Activities; Defense Cooperation Account", pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2608(e); Public Law 101-403, Sec. 202(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 112-81, Sec. 1064(7)); (125 Stat. 1587); to the Committee on Armed Services.

1635. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Suspension of Community Eligibility (New Haven County, CT, et al.) [Docket ID: FEMA-2017-0002; Internal Agency Docket No.: FEMA-8479] received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.

1636. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Administrator, Diversion Control Division, Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice, transmitting the Department's final order — Schedules of Controlled Substances: Placement of Acetyl Fentanyl Into Schedule I [Docket No.: DEA-413] received June 8, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1637. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; State of California; Coachella Valley; Attainment Plan for 1997 8-Hour Ozone Standards [EPA-R09-OAR-2016-0244; FRL-9962-54-Region 9] received June 7, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1638. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's direct final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Texas Control of Air Pollution from Motor Vehicles with Mobile Source Incentive Programs [EPA-R06-OAR-2014-0497; FRL-9962-47-Region 6] received June 7, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1639. A letter from the Director, Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's direct final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Texas; Revisions to the General Definitions for Texas Air Quality Rules [EPA-R06-OAR-2016-0464; FRL-9962-23-Region 6] received June 7, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1640. A letter from the Deputy Chief, Mobility Division, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Federal Communications

Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Review of the Commission's Part 95 Personal Radio Services Rules [WT Docket No.: 10-119]; Petition for Rulemaking of Garmin International, Inc. (RM-10762); Petition for Rulemaking of Omnitronics, L.L.C. (RM-10844) received June 8, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1641. A letter from the Acting Chief Executive Officer, Corporation For National and Community Service, transmitting the Corporation's Semiannual Report from the Office of Inspector General for the period October 1, 2016, through March 30, 2017, pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1642. A letter from the Acting Chief Financial Officer, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's Annual Performance Report for FY 2016-2018, and the Department's Annual Performance Plan, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1115(b); Public Law 111-352, Sec. 3; (124 Stat. 3867); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1643. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Labor, transmitting the Department's Semiannual Report to the Congress from the Office of Inspector General, for the period October 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017, pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1644. A letter from the Director, General Counsel and Legal Policy Division, Office of Government Ethics, transmitting the Office's final rule — Technical Updating Amendments to Executive Branch Financial Disclosure and Standards of Ethical Conduct Regulations (RINs: 3209-AA00 and 3209-AA04) received June 8, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1645. A letter from the Chairman of the Board, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's Semiannual Report to the Congress by Office of Inspector General and the Corporation's Management Response for the period October 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017, pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1646. A letter from the Administrator, Small Business Administration, transmitting the Administration's Office of Inspector General Semiannual Report to Congress, covering the period of October 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017, pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1647. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Standards Branch, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Oil and Gas and Sulphur Operations in the Outer Continental Shelf-Lease Continuation Through Operations [17XE1700DX EX1SF0000.DAQ000 EEEE50000] (RIN: 1014-AA35) received June 7, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1648. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Snapper-Grouper Resources of the South Atlantic; Commercial Trip Limit Reduction [Docket No.: 130312235-3658-02] (RIN: 0648-XF290) received June 6, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110

Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1649. A letter from the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, NMFS, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Atlantic Shark Management Measures; Final Amendment 5b [Docket No.: 130417378-7331-02] (RIN: 0648-BD22) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1650. A letter from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 620 in the Gulf of Alaska [Docket No.: 160920866-7167-02] (RIN: 0648-XF253) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1651. A letter from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2017 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic [Docket No.: 001005281-0369-02] (RIN: 0648-XF218) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1652. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Zone Off Alaska; Pollock in Statistical Area 630 in the Gulf of Alaska [Docket No.: 140918791-4999-02] (RIN: 0648-XF200) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1653. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's reapportionment of tribal Pacific whiting allocation — Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries Off West Coast States; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; 2016 Tribal Fishery Allocations for Pacific Whiting; Reapportionment Between Tribal and Non-Tribal Sectors [Docket No.: 160126053-6398-02] (RIN: 0648-XF230) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1654. A letter from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's temporary rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pollock in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands [Docket No.: 161020985-7181-02] (RIN: 0648-XF262) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

1655. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Department of Labor, transmitting the Department's final rule — Department of Homeland Security and Department of Labor Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Annual Adjustments for the H-2B Temporary Non-agricultural Worker Program [CIS No.: 2585-16] (RIN: 1615-AC10) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-

121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

1656. A letter from the Chief, Border Security Regulations Branch, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Merchandise Produced by Convict, Forced, or Indentured Labor; Conforming Amendment and Technical Corrections [CBP Dec. No. 17-04] (RIN: 1515-AE22) received June 5, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

1657. A letter from the Board Chairman and CEO, Farm Credit Administration, transmitting the Administration's Fiscal Year 2018 Proposed Budget and Performance Plan, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1115(b); Public Law 111-352, Sec. 3; (124 Stat. 3867); jointly to the Committees on Agriculture and Oversight and Government Reform.

1658. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a determination to suspend the limitation on the obligation of State Department Appropriations contained in Secs. 3(b) and 7(b) of this Act for six months, pursuant to Public Law 104-45, Sec. 7(a)(1); (109 Stat. 400); jointly to the Committees on Foreign Affairs and Appropriations.

1659. A letter from the Labor Member, and Management Member, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting the Board's report on the actuarial status of the railroad retirement system, including any recommendations for financing changes, pursuant to 45 U.S.C. 231u(a)(1); Aug. 29, 1935, ch. 812, Sec. 22(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 107-90, Sec. 108(a)); (115 Stat. 890); jointly to the Committees on Ways and Means and Transportation and Infrastructure.

1660. A letter from the Labor Member, and Management Member, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting the Board's 2017 annual report on the financial status of the railroad unemployment insurance system, pursuant to 45 U.S.C. 369; Public Law 100-647, Sec. 7105; (102 Stat. 3772); jointly to the Committees on Ways and Means and Transportation and Infrastructure.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. BURGESS: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 382. Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1215) to improve patient access to health care services and provide improved medical care by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the health care delivery system (Rept. 115-179). Referred to the House Calendar.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. WELCH (for himself and Mr. HARPER):

H.R. 2889. A bill to amend title III of the Public Health Service Act to limit the orphan drug exclusion under the drug discount program under section 340B of such title; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. HULTGREN (for himself and Ms. MOORE):

H.R. 2890. A bill to amend the Federal Home Loan Bank Act to permit captive insurance companies that were members of a Federal Home Loan Bank prior to September 12, 2014, to continue to be eligible to be members of such a Bank, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. BISHOP of Georgia (for himself and Mr. DENT):

H.R. 2891. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the eligibility of children of Vietnam veterans born with spina bifida for benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. ENGEL (for himself and Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN):

H.R. 2892. A bill to amend chapter 329 of title 49, United States Code, to ensure that new vehicles enable fuel competition so as to reduce the strategic importance of oil to the United States; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. GRIFFITH (for himself and Mr. GOODLATTE):

H.R. 2893. A bill to amend the Natural Gas Act to bolster fairness and transparency in consideration of interstate natural gas pipelines, to provide for greater public input opportunities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. KEATING:

H.R. 2894. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for education and outreach with respect to the prevention and treatment of tick-borne illnesses; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of

New York (for himself, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Ms. NORTON, Ms. LEE, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. KEATING, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Ms. TITUS, Mr. PETERS, Ms. ESTY of Connecticut, Mr. POCAN, Mr. KILDEE, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. NADLER, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, and Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York):

H.R. 2895. A bill to provide a requirement to improve data collection efforts; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. NOLAN:

H.R. 2896. A bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to provide a midyear cost-of-living increase to account for an insufficient increase for 2017, to apply the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) to future Social Security COLAs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. NORTON:

H.R. 2897. A bill to authorize the Mayor of the District of Columbia and the Director of the National Park Service to enter into cooperative management agreements for the operation, maintenance, and management of units of the National Park System in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. O'HALLERAN (for himself and Mr. WESTERMAN):

H.R. 2898. A bill to amend the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 to modify the appointment and

composition of resource advisory committees; to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Natural Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. SENSENBRENNER (for himself, Mr. GOODLATTE, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. CONYERS, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. COLLINS of Georgia, Mr. WALKER, Mr. MARINO, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Mrs. LOVE, Mr. TAYLOR, Mrs. COMSTOCK, and Mr. JEFFRIES):

H.R. 2899. A bill to reauthorize the Second Chance Act of 2007; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BUCK:

H. Res. 381. A resolution electing Members to certain standing committees of the House of Representatives; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. HECK (for himself, Mr. KILMER, Ms. DELBENE, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. LEE, Mr. TED LIEU of California, and Mr. LARSEN of Washington):

H. Res. 383. A resolution to express support for recognition of June 2017 as National Orca Protection Month; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following statements are submitted regarding the specific powers granted to Congress in the Constitution to enact the accompanying bill or joint resolution.

By Mr. WELCH:

H.R. 2889.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18: The Congress shall have Power To . . . make all Laws, which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

By Mr. HULTGREN:

H.R. 2890.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18: To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3: To regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes

By Mr. BISHOP of Georgia:

H.R. 2891.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The commerce clause, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3.

By Mr. ENGEL:

H.R. 2892.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under the following provisions of the United States Constitution:

Article I, Section 1;

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1;

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3; and

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18.

By Mr. GRIFFITH:

H.R. 2893.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under Article I, Section 8, Clause 18 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. KEATING:

H.R. 2894.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York:

H.R. 2895.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1 Section 8

By Mr. NOLAN:

H.R. 2896.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution.

By Ms. NORTON:

H.R. 2897.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

clause 2 of section 3 of article IV of the Constitution and clause 17 of section 8 of article I of the Constitution.

By Mr. O'HALLERAN:

H.R. 2898.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18

By Mr. SENSENBRENNER:

H.R. 2899.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions, as follows:

H.R. 15: Mr. PERLMUTTER.

H.R. 112: Mr. CRIST and Mr. DUNN.

H.R. 169: Mr. VARGAS.

H.R. 233: Mr. PALLONE.

H.R. 242: Mr. DEFAZZO, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. SUOZZI, and Ms. LOFGREN.

H.R. 373: Mr. ROKITA.

H.R. 392: Mr. GALLAGHER, Mr. MEEHAN, and Mr. RENACCI.

H.R. 422: Mrs. WAGNER, Mr. YODER, Mr. BABIN, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. MESSER, Mr. HILL, and Mr. LABRADOR.

H.R. 468: Mr. SWALWELL of California.

H.R. 489: Ms. SEWELL of Alabama and Mr. FOSTER.

H.R. 535: Mr. LAMALFA.

H.R. 553: Mr. ROUZER.

H.R. 564: Mr. PALAZZO.

H.R. 586: Mr. COLLE.

H.R. 631: Mr. LAHOOD.

H.R. 632: Mr. GALLAGHER.

H.R. 638: Mr. SHERMAN.

H.R. 664: Mr. BOST.

H.R. 721: Ms. STEFANIK and Mr. PERLMUTTER.

H.R. 747: Mr. OLSON and Mr. RUSH.

H.R. 750: Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 769: Mr. ROKITA.

H.R. 828: Ms. SINEMA.

H.R. 830: Mr. KING of New York.

H.R. 837: Ms. MATSUI.

H.R. 849: Mr. NEWHOUSE, Mr. BACON, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. LATTI, Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee, and Mr. GOWDY.

H.R. 852: Mr. FOSTER.

H.R. 878: Mr. POE of Texas.

H.R. 978: Mrs. MURPHY of Florida.

H.R. 1022: Ms. JAYAPAL.

H.R. 1046: Mr. PETERS.

H.R. 1057: Mr. VELA, Mr. SWALWELL of California, and Mr. MULLIN.

H.R. 1058: Mr. CARSON of Indiana.

H.R. 1062: Mr. SANFORD.

H.R. 1098: Mr. O'HALLERAN.

H.R. 1148: Mr. RICE of South Carolina.

H.R. 1164: Mr. DESANTIS.

H.R. 1171: Mr. GOTTHEIMER, Mr. KIND, Mr. VALADAO, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. LIPINSKI, and Ms. BROWNLEY of California.

H.R. 1225: Mr. SCHIFF.

H.R. 1267: Mrs. WAGNER.

H.R. 1291: Mr. SOTO and Mr. FOSTER.

H.R. 1298: Mr. LOESACK, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. MARSHALL, and Mr. MOULTON.

H.R. 1307: Mr. DELANEY.

H.R. 1316: Mr. MARSHALL.

H.R. 1361: Ms. CASTOR of Florida and Mr. CONYERS.

H.R. 1393: Ms. ROSEN.

H.R. 1406: Mr. LEVIN, Mr. JONES, Mr. STIVERS, Mr. MARINO, and Mr. RUIZ.

H.R. 1415: Ms. BASS.

H.R. 1421: Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. REICHERT, and Mr. PETERS.

H.R. 1422: Mr. WILLIAMS.

H.R. 1438: Mr. RUIZ.

H.R. 1441: Mr. CARTER of Texas, Mr. KNIGHT, and Mr. BABIN.

H.R. 1444: Mr. COLE and Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 1447: Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. BLUMENAUER, and Mr. MOULTON.

H.R. 1456: Mr. YOHO, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. RUIZ, and Mr. BUDD.

H.R. 1475: Mr. SUOZZI and Mrs. TORRES.

H.R. 1494: Mr. VELA, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, and Mr. CLEAVER.

H.R. 1515: Mr. MOULTON.

H.R. 1529: Mr. LABRADOR.

H.R. 1542: Mr. CARSON of Indiana.

H.R. 1552: Mr. MARSHALL.

H.R. 1558: Mr. MESSER.

H.R. 1566: Mr. CARSON of Indiana.

H.R. 1626: Mr. BOST and Ms. BROWNLEY of California.

H.R. 1635: Mr. ROSKAM.

H.R. 1655: Mr. BLUMENAUER.

H.R. 1661: Mr. SOTO.

H.R. 1697: Mr. HUIZENGA, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. MCHENRY, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. BRIDENSTINE, Mr. HUDSON, Mr. BACON, Mr. SMITH of Nebraska, Mr. RUSSELL, Mr. GARRETT, Mr. GONZALEZ of Texas, and Mr. COLE.

H.R. 1698: Mr. HUIZENGA, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. MULLIN, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Mr. PERLMUTTER, and Mr. RUSSELL.

H.R. 1711: Mr. SOTO.

H.R. 1739: Mr. MOULTON.

H.R. 1777: Ms. TENNEY.

H.R. 1811: Mrs. COMSTOCK and Mrs. LOVE.

H.R. 1821: Mr. ALLEN.

H.R. 1825: Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. TONKO, and Mr. CRAMER.

H.R. 1828: Ms. ROSEN.

H.R. 1832: Mr. RICHMOND.

H.R. 1838: Ms. BONAMICI.

H.R. 1864: Mr. CARSON of Indiana.

H.R. 1865: Mr. ROSKAM, Mr. ROUZER, Ms. MOORE, and Mr. SHIMKUS.

H.R. 1874: Mr. KATKO and Mr. STIVERS.

H.R. 1911: Mr. FOSTER, Mr. BOST, Mr. SUOZZI, Mr. BISHOP of Michigan, Mr. LIPINSKI, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, and Mr. PASCRELL.

H.R. 1928: Ms. TENNEY, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. UPTON, and Mr. POSEY.

H.R. 1951: Mr. RUIZ.

H.R. 1955: Mr. PEARCE.

H.R. 2002: Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida.

H.R. 2059: Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas.

H.R. 2069: Mr. COLE and Mr. HASTINGS.

H.R. 2077: Mr. BACON and Ms. ROSEN.

H.R. 2106: Mr. REICHERT, Ms. STEFANIK, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. COOPER.

- H.R. 2119: Ms. LOFGREN and Mrs. BEATTY.
H.R. 2141: Ms. ROSEN.
H.R. 2148: Mr. TIPTON.
H.R. 2150: Mr. ALLEN and Mr. FORTENBERRY.
H.R. 2158: Mr. RUSH and Mr. SMITH of New Jersey.
H.R. 2215: Mr. BEYER, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. SINEMA, and Mr. CAPUANO.
H.R. 2224: Mr. MARSHALL, Mrs. WALORSKI, Mr. HOLDING, Mr. ROUZER, and Mr. TIPTON.
H.R. 2232: Mr. ROKITA.
H.R. 2240: Ms. SINEMA and Mrs. MURPHY of Florida.
H.R. 2248: Mr. WELCH, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mrs. DEMINGS, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. KILMER, Ms. WILSON of Florida, and Mr. SERRANO.
H.R. 2306: Ms. PINGREE.
H.R. 2308: Ms. KAPTUR.
H.R. 2315: Mr. POE of Texas.
H.R. 2317: Mr. FITZPATRICK.
H.R. 2318: Mr. HECK.
H.R. 2352: Mr. WALKER.
H.R. 2358: Ms. MCCOLLUM.
H.R. 2371: Mr. GALLEGO.
H.R. 2383: Mr. PETERSON.
H.R. 2396: Mr. SHERMAN and Mr. LUETKEMEYER.
H.R. 2401: Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. DESAULNIER, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. RUSH, and Mr. BOST.
H.R. 2408: Mr. MAST and Ms. KAPTUR.
H.R. 2426: Mr. CAPUANO.
H.R. 2434: Mr. FERGUSON.
H.R. 2435: Mr. RASKIN.
H.R. 2476: Mr. MOULTON.
H.R. 2480: Mr. HARRIS, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, Mr. KELLY of Mississippi, Mr. GIBBS, Mr. WEBER of Texas, Mr. LAMALFA, Mr. ISSA, Ms. TENNEY, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. FLORES, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, and Mr. RASKIN.
H.R. 2482: Mr. BACON, Mr. GARAMENDI, Ms. LEE, Mr. CLEAVER, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. LAWSON of Florida, and Mr. VALADAO.
H.R. 2506: Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. EVANS, Mr. THOMAS J. ROONEY of Florida, and Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire.
H.R. 2595: Mr. VALADAO.
H.R. 2616: Mr. JONES and Mr. O'HALLERAN.
H.R. 2620: Mr. BABIN, Mr. BUCSHON, and Mr. ROKITA.
H.R. 2641: Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. KILMER, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. CONNOLLY, Miss RICE of New York, Mr. PETERS, Mr. DESAULNIER, and Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER.
H.R. 2651: Mr. MEEKS, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. CLAY, Mr. KNIGHT, Mr. DEFazio, and Mr. MACARTHUR.
H.R. 2652: Mr. TAKANO.
H.R. 2662: Mr. CRAMER.
H.R. 2670: Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD and Mr. MEEKS.
H.R. 2704: Ms. BROWNLEY of California.
H.R. 2723: Mrs. ROBY and Mr. ROUZER.
H.R. 2742: Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania and Mr. RENACCI.
H.R. 2745: Mr. SCHIFF and Mr. SERRANO.
H.R. 2790: Ms. MENG, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. AGUILAR, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, and Ms. ESTY of Connecticut.
H.R. 2801: Mr. SERRANO, Miss RICE of New York, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. SUOZZI.
H.R. 2825: Mr. FITZPATRICK, Ms. MCSALLY, Mr. KING of New York, and Mr. GALLAGHER.
H.R. 2826: Mr. RATCLIFFE, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, and Mr. BROOKS of Alabama.
H.R. 2827: Mr. COHEN.
H.R. 2834: Ms. BASS.
H.R. 2836: Mr. DIAZ-BALART.
H.R. 2847: Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois.
H.R. 2855: Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER.
H.R. 2857: Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois.
H.R. 2859: Ms. BONAMICI.
H.R. 2866: Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Ms. BASS, and Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois.
H.R. 2867: Ms. NORTON.
H.R. 2881: Mr. HARRIS.
H.R. 2884: Mr. TED LIEU of California, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. LIPINSKI, Mr. DEFazio, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. SOTO, Ms. LEE, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. CLAY.
H.R. 2887: Mr. ROHRABACHER.
H.J. Res. 51: Mr. NEWHOUSE, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee, and Mr. BACON.
H.J. Res. 104: Mr. GRIJALVA.
H. Con. Res. 13: Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS, Mr. THORNBERRY, and Mr. CURBELO of Florida.
H. Con. Res. 49: Mr. BLUMENAUER.
H. Con. Res. 63: Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. CROWLEY.
H. Res. 15: Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. MOULTON, and Mr. GOTTHEIMER.
H. Res. 30: Mr. KIND.
H. Res. 136: Mrs. LOWEY.
H. Res. 218: Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia.
H. Res. 257: Mr. MEEKS.
H. Res. 285: Mr. PALLONE.
H. Res. 313: Mr. MAST.
H. Res. 316: Mr. POE of Texas, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, and Mr. GOSAR.
H. Res. 317: Mr. COLE.
H. Res. 332: Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. PERLMUTTER, and Ms. CLARKE of New York.
H. Res. 351: Mr. BLUMENAUER and Ms. MENG.



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No. 100

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, Sovereign of this planet, give us the wisdom to surrender to Your will.

Lord, guide our lawmakers to trust You with all of their challenges and opportunities, as they strive to please You in their thoughts, words, and actions. Provide them with the discernment they need to tackle the problems of these critical times. When they feel overwhelmed, sustain them as they give You their burdens. As they seek to be totally dependent on You for their guidance and strength, free them from the chains of anxiety and fear. May Your sovereign might abound in their lives.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SANCTIONS LEGISLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, the Republican Senate took another step to advance key sanctions legislation to hold Iran accountable. The Iranians are pursuing a regional strategy intent on empowering Shia

militias, Hezbollah, their Houthi proxies, and other groups. After years of the Obama administration's willingness to ignore Iran's malign activities and failure to address Iran's provocations, we finally have an administration that shares our desire to take a stronger approach to keep the American people safe.

This legislation will enhance our ability to hold Iran accountable, which is of great importance given Iran's continued testing of ballistic missiles, its harassment of U.S. vessels at sea, and its support of terrorism across the region.

At a time when we face many challenges both at home and abroad, we must do everything we can to enable our country to counter threats where they exist and protect the American people. That is why we will keep working to pass this Iran sanctions legislation and, with it, additional sanctions on Russia.

I again want to commend Senator CORKER and the ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee and Senator CRAPO and the ranking member on the Banking Committee, who worked to craft this bipartisan agreement.

This is a signal. Russia's attempt to influence our elections last year was the result of 8 years of a failed foreign policy. The Obama administration's efforts to draw down our conventional capabilities and commitments made it clear to aggressive states such as China, Russia, and Iran that America would watch passively as they increased their respective spheres of influence. This bipartisan amendment should represent the first step in crafting a policy response to cyber attacks against our country.

Now, two things must follow from this small step. First, our Department of Defense and intelligence community must develop a warfighting doctrine and strategy that recognizes cyber attacks, active measures, and support of

proxies as asymmetric, unconventional attacks on the United States. Our response needs to be tied to the escalatory ladder and an overwhelming response. No nation-state should be able to attack our sovereignty without suffering an unacceptable response. Sanctions represent only one facet of our foreign policy tools.

Second, Senators coming together to impose additional sanctions against Iran and Russia should work toward providing the Defense Department with the force structure and combat readiness necessary to restore deterrents against these aggressor states. Again, sanctions are only one foreign policy tool.

We must also restore both our foreign presence and our full-spectrum warfighting capability as well. Doing so will send a message to those nations that wish us harm, and it will reassure our allies.

RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Last, Mr. President, as it concerns our allies, later today the junior Senator from Kentucky will move to discharge a resolution of disapproval against American arms sales to Saudi Arabia. It is important to note that our Sunni Arab allies are engaged in two important struggles. The first is against ISIL and the extremist ideology it espouses and the attacks it pursues. The second is against Iran's efforts to expand its sphere of influence and revolution across the broader Middle East. In Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are fighting against the Iranian proxy Houthi forces. As we know, some have raised the issue of the Saudi conduct of that war, but blocking this arms sale will diminish Saudi capability to target with precision.

The complete arms sales package to Saudi Arabia includes munitions, professional military education, training, air and missile defense systems, and air

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



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force modernization. Part of the training provided to Saudi Arabia will be on subjects such as avoiding civilian casualties.

More important, as the counter-ISIL coalition continues to make gains in Mosul and Raqqa, Iranian-supported militias in Iraq are posturing to create a land bridge through Iraq and into Syria. This land bridge could ultimately extend to Lebanon and improve Iran's support for Hezbollah. So now is not the time to undermine one of our critical allies in the Arab world by disapproving part of an arms sales package that will improve Saudi capabilities.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now, on another matter, the House of Representatives will vote later today on the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017, which would give the Department of Veterans Affairs more of the tools it needs to hold bad actors accountable. Last week, the Senate passed this bipartisan legislation on a voice vote, and once the House weighs in, the bill will go to the President's desk for his signature.

Throughout our country, VA facilities have been plagued by widespread dysfunction. Our veterans deserve the timely and effective care they were promised, and I am committed to continue working with colleagues in Congress and in the administration to make sure they get it. This sensible approach has been a top priority of this Congress, and I am proud that we came together to continue addressing the problems in our VA system.

Representing Kentucky veterans is one of the greatest privileges I have had as a Senator. Through their selfless service, America's veterans have earned our admiration and our gratitude. This legislation is just one example of how Congress and the administration are working to keep our commitments to our Nation's veterans.

I would like to thank Senator RUBIO and Chairman ISAKSON for their work on this measure on behalf of our Nation's veterans. I look forward to the House voting later today to send this bill to the President.

THE ECONOMY AND TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now, on one final matter, after 8 years of sluggish economic growth under the Obama administration, I was pleased to see some positive numbers out of last month's jobs report. Now, following so many years of failed leftwing policies that held Americans back, a new administration and a pro-growth Congress have been working together to move our economy and job creation in a positive direction. We have already

undertaken what has been described as the most ambitious regulatory rollback since Reagan, and we are working hard in a number of other areas as well.

In fact, this month the administration is redoubling those efforts on the economy, kicking off with an emphasis on workforce development. These initiatives are a top priority for many States like mine, who are proud to have a Governor who has been a staunch advocate for expanding apprenticeship programs and preparing a workforce that can fill current employment gaps while also attracting new businesses and job opportunities to our State.

I have also been proud to play a role in supporting these efforts, and I have worked to secure Federal funds for workforce development programs in Kentucky. Specifically, I have been proud to help secure funding for training and employment services for laid-off coal miners in an effort to help them find new job opportunities.

Efforts like these are critical in preparing American workers for success in today's global economy, but we know there is more we can do to help. One way the Republican Senate is working to do that is through tax reform. It has been more than 30 years since we last passed comprehensive tax reform legislation, and since then, the international economy has only grown more competitive. That is why it is imperative that we do what we can to modernize our tax structure, as we also better prepare America's workforce for the many challenges and the global competition that face us in today's economy.

Over the past three decades, our tax system has grown increasingly convoluted and punitive, making it harder for individuals and businesses to succeed. In fact, according to the National Taxpayer Advocate's annual report to Congress, "if tax compliance were an industry, it would be one of the largest in the United States." It is not hard to see why, considering that our Internal Revenue Code is made up of about 4 million words, which, to give some context, is nearly seven times longer than Leo Tolstoy's notoriously lengthy "War and Peace."

It goes on to say that "a simpler, more transparent tax code will substantially reduce the estimated six billion hours and \$195 billion that taxpayers spend on income tax return preparation; reduce the disparity in tax liabilities between sophisticated or well advised taxpayers and other taxpayers; enable taxpayers to understand how their tax liabilities are computed and prepare their own returns; improve taxpayer morale and tax compliance . . . and enable the IRS to administer the tax system more effectively and better meet taxpayer needs."

In short, as that report observed, when it comes to our Tax Code, there is no doubt simpler is better.

So how do we get a simpler Tax Code? With tax reform. But that is just

one of the numerous benefits that would come from a revised tax system.

For instance, instead of inadvertently incentivizing companies to go overseas, as our current Tax Code does, a revised system would encourage businesses to keep jobs right here in the United States. Instead of restricting businesses' ability to expand, create jobs, and increase wages, as our current Tax Code does, a revised system would open up more opportunities for workers. Instead of deterring the type of growth that boosts the economy and puts more people back to work, as our current Tax Code does, a revised system would actually promote American investment.

These are just the types of solutions middle-class families need right now, and they are the types of policies that the Republican Senate will continue to pursue as we work to reform our tax system. Fortunately, we now have an administration that is actually interested in making our Tax Code simpler for families and American businesses alike, without demanding \$1 trillion in tax hikes for more government spending.

Respective committees in the House and Senate have been working for some time to move our tax reform efforts forward, and the Speaker and I recently had a productive meeting with the President about this very issue. I appreciate the good work my colleagues are doing on this matter, especially the Finance Committee chairman, Senator HATCH, who has long been an advocate for simplifying our Tax Code. He has been working closely with committee members and Chairman BRADY to advance the tax reform our economy simply demands.

This is not an easy process. There are difficult issues that must be navigated, particularly with respect to business reform, but I am confident we can arrive at solutions that will be good for American workers and the businesses that employ them. We have made progress already, and we will keep moving forward as Members offer their input for consideration.

I hope our friends across the aisle will come together in support of these bipartisan objectives as well, but either way, we have to keep working on this issue because we know the benefits tax reform can have for the American people who, after 8 long years of sluggish economic growth under the Obama administration, deserve a lot more.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

RUSSIA SANCTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night Senators reached a bipartisan agreement on a package of Russia sanctions for the Senate to vote on as an amendment to the pending Iran sanctions.

It was the result of several days of negotiations and hard work. The Republican leader and I spent a lot of time on this, and I thank him for that, as did Senators CRAPO, BROWN, CARDIN, CORKER, SHAHEEN, DURBIN, and MENENDEZ. I thank each of them for their efforts and their expertise in getting this done.

In particular, I thank Senator CARDIN, ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, who is one of the most trusted voices in our caucus on this issue. He did an excellent job of forging a bipartisan consensus on this committee with little regard for the credit he would receive. I also want to thank Senator BROWN, our ranking member on Banking, who has been steadfast in making sure we would get a good, effective sanctions bill done. We wouldn't have done this also without Senators SHAHEEN, DURBIN, MENENDEZ, and their staffs. I thank all of them.

The final result of these negotiations is a good result for our country. By codifying the existing sanctions and requiring congressional review of any decision to weaken or lift them, we are ensuring that the United States continues to punish President Putin for his reckless and destabilizing actions. I believe it is particularly significant that a bipartisan coalition is seeking to reestablish Congress as a final arbiter of sanctions relief, no matter what the administration does, particularly, considering that this administration has been too eager to put sanctions relief on the table. These additional sanctions will also send a powerful and bipartisan statement to Russia and any other country that might try to interfere in our elections that they will be punished, and Congress will stand firm in making sure they are punished, Democrats and Republicans.

Again, I thank my Republican and Democratic colleagues for putting party aside, for doing what is best for the country. I hope this agreement quickly passes both the House and Senate, and we hope the President will sign this legislation as well, even though it cedes the power to Congress.

SPECIAL COUNSEL MUELLER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I am frankly disturbed by the new strategy on the hard right to discredit Special Counsel Mueller and sully his reputation. Their strategy is clear. They know or suspect that facts might not be good for the President so they are trying to vilify the man who is in charge of finding them, but they have chosen the wrong man. Anyone who engages in these baseless attacks about Mr. Mueller's character is only heaping dishonor upon themselves.

Mr. Mueller is known for his service to America and for his integrity. He is a straight arrow. He is a Republican. Only a few weeks ago, these same hard-right commentators and pundits were praising Mr. Mueller. They were

lauding his qualities. Even Attorney General Jeff Sessions has unequivocally praised Mr. Mueller in the past for his service and credibility. Sessions said, Mueller's "integrity is undoubted . . . his experience and love of country is undoubted."

To these hard-right commentators who are attacking this honorable man who is trying to do a job for our country and see that the rule of law is obeyed, read what Attorney General Sessions has said.

Now, because Director Comey's testimony has made President Trump's actions less and less defensible, these hard-right commentators have turned tail. They have started an ad hominem, nasty assault on a career public servant and a very fine man.

A close associate of the President, Mr. Christopher Ruddy, has even insinuated that the President might fire Special Counsel Mueller. I can't think of a worse move for the President at this time. I would have him look back in history and see what happened to a President who tried to do the same thing.

I have one question. What are these people who are attacking Mueller afraid of? Are they afraid of what Mr. Mueller is going to find? Is the White House afraid of what Mr. Mueller is going to uncover?

It seems pretty obvious that if they were not worried, they would let Mueller proceed because they would be confident he would find nothing. I find no other legitimate reason why the critics would flip so quickly to attack a man of integrity unless they were worried about what he might find. Again, if the White House truly has nothing to hide, they ought to encourage Special Counsel Mueller to investigate. They should let him do his job.

When people say "where there is smoke, there is fire," they are pointing to actions like this, and it makes the American people distrustful of the White House and their allies.

I know these attacks probably don't bother Mr. Mueller. He has a very strong spine, and he will go after the facts regardless of the noise around him, but they are bothersome, they are wrong, and they are nasty.

One of the most important things in our democracy is a bedrock faith in the rule of law; that no person is above the rule of law. The President's allies are going to attack every single law enforcement agent involved in the Russia investigation. If the White House ever joins in those attacks, it will greatly erode the American people's faith in the rule of law and do significant damage to our democracy at a time when it seems somewhat more fragile than it has in the past. This is not a game. This is not fun.

This is a very serious investigation that is headed by one of the most trusted men in Washington. It is about foreign interference in our elections, something that eats at—that corrodes the very roots of our democracy, the

very wellspring of our being, and pride as a nation. I would urge that these attacks on Mr. Mueller be ceased and that my friends on the other side join me in defending his reputation. They have gone a little too far.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally on healthcare, there are only 11 calendar days of Senate business left before the July 4th recess, and yet Republicans are looking to vote on a final healthcare bill before the deadline, and not a soul outside the Republican caucus has seen the bill. I am not sure that every Member of the Republican caucus inside has seen it.

To everyone in America, this should be a red alert. This should be a red alert for doctors, hospital administrators, and patient groups, groups that represent older Americans, groups that fight for children's healthcare, groups that fight for better treatment for substance abuse and mental health. This should be a red alert for working families across this country whose lives depend on affordable healthcare and yet have no earthly idea what their representatives in Congress might pass in just 2 short weeks.

They might never know. The Republicans have not scheduled a single committee hearing—not one—not a single committee hearing on a bill that would reorganize one-sixth of the American economy, touch the lives of millions of Americans—a life-and-death issue for some—not a single committee hearing or public debate on a bill that would potentially change drastically the way Medicaid is funded, the way women are treated in our healthcare system, the way we treat older Americans and those with preexisting conditions.

Why on Earth haven't we had a single committee hearing on a bill of this magnitude? Why on Earth is this bill being hidden from public view?

There is only one reason. The Republican majority is afraid of the American people learning what is in their healthcare bill. They don't want the American people to know how much they cut and destroy Medicaid or how fat of a tax break they give to the wealthiest few because they know the backlash would be severe. In short, by their actions, it seems our Republican colleagues are ashamed of this bill, and they know their chances of passing the Republican healthcare bill would plummet if they release a bill that looks anything like the House healthcare bill, which only a tiny sliver of Americans support—17 percent in the last poll. The majority of Republicans and the majority of Trump voters are opposed to TrumpCare.

So our Republican colleagues have made a calculation, which is ultimately self-defeating, to keep their healthcare bill hidden from view under lock and key until the last possible moment. Maybe this is the only strategy to pass a bill as unpopular as this

bill is going to be. Maybe it will shield their bill from criticism in the short term, but make no mistake, there will be a reckoning if this bill is passed.

Passing a bill of this scale, with so many consequences for the American people, without telling them what is in it, without telling them how they would fare, the political retribution will be swift. It will be a catastrophe for the Republican Party. I am afraid, worse, this bill will be a catastrophe for the American people.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

Under the previous order, the Senator from Kentucky or his designee will be recognized.

The Senator from Kentucky.

MOTION TO DISCHARGE—S.J. RES. 42

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, pursuant to the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, I move to discharge the Foreign Relations Committee from further consideration of S.J. Res. 42, relating to the disapproval of the proposed foreign military sale to the Government of Saudi Arabia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12:30 p.m. will be equally divided between the proponents and opponents of the motion to discharge.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, today is an extraordinary day. Today is an auspicious day, for we will be discussing issues of war and peace.

Believe it or not, we rarely discuss such important issues. We have been at war for 15 years. There have been a handful of debates—most of them indirect, most of them forced only under duress, and most of them would have been avoided if the leadership of both parties could avoid them, but today they cannot avoid this debate because this is what is called a privileged motion.

Today we will discuss the involvement of the United States in the Middle East, and we will also discuss whether we should engage in a new war in Yemen. Today we will discuss an arms sale to Saudi Arabia that threatens the lives of millions of Yemenis, but we will discuss something even more important than an arms sale, we will discuss whether we should be actively involved. Should the United States be actively involved with refueling the Saudi planes, with picking targets, with having advisers on the ground? Should we be at war in Yemen?

If you remember your Constitution, it says no President has that authority—only to repel imminent attack—but no President alone has the unilateral authority to take us to war. Yet here we are on the verge of war.

What will war mean for Yemen? Seventeen million folks in Yemen live on the brink of starvation. I think to myself, is there ever anything important that can happen in Washington? Is there anything I can do to save some of the millions of children who are dying in Yemen? This is it. This is this debate today.

It isn't about an arms sale, it is about children like Ali, who died. Why are they dying? Because the Soviets have blockaded the ports. Ninety percent of Yemen's food comes in from the ocean and they can get no food and they are starving and dying of cholera because of war. We think of famine being related to the weather. Sometimes it is, but more often than not famine is related to man, is manmade, and the most common cause is war.

How bad is it in Yemen? Seventeen million people live on the edge of starvation. Some, like Ali, have already died. What are people saying about it? They say that the humanitarian crisis in Yemen may be worse than Syria.

Let me repeat that because nobody in America is listening to this. Everybody is paying attention to some silly show trials and silly stuff going on in committees. Nobody is talking about this at all. They say it is worse than Syria. Millions of people have fled Syria. Hundreds of thousands have died, and people are now predicting Yemen may be worse.

One refugee group said this: The impending famine in Yemen may reach Biblical proportions. Think about that. It is astounding what is going on there, and it is being done without your permission but with your weapons.

Today I will force a vote with the help of Senator MURPHY, who has been a prime mover in this, to tell you the truth, and has done a great job in bringing people together, but we will force this vote for these children in Yemen because we have a chance today to stop the carnage. We have a chance to tell Saudi Arabia we have had enough.

The question is, Should we give money or arms to Saudi Arabia at all? What has Saudi Arabia done over the last 30 years? They have been the No. 1 exporter of jihadist philosophy, the No. 1 exporter of let's hate America, let's hate the Judeo-Christian ethic, let's hate the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is coming from Saudi Arabia. They teach it in the schools in our country. They teach it in the schools in Indonesia. They corrupt the religion of Islam throughout the world, and we are going to give them weapons? I think it is a huge, huge mistake.

If you say: Well, I doubt that. There is no way they are that bad. Don't they share intelligence with us? Don't they help us in the war on terror?

Yes, every time they help us, they hurt us twofold worse. I will give you an example directly from Hillary Clinton. When she is writing honestly and not talking to the public, she sends an email to John Podesta. This is one that was leaked through WikiLeaks. Writing to John Podesta, Hillary Clinton said: We must put pressure on Saudi Arabia and Qatar because they are supplying logistical and financial support to ISIL.

ISIS is the group we are fighting in the Middle East again, and Saudi Arabia was supplying them. This is according to Hillary Clinton, not indirectly but directly.

Who in their right mind would give money, arms, or share our technology with a country that has been supporting ISIS? Who would do that? Who would think that is a good idea? Yet they will come here and say that it is about Iran, and we have to combat Iran everywhere.

Guess what. This may make the situation with Iran worse. What do you think Iran thinks when Saudi Arabia gets weapons? They think to themselves, well, if the Saudis are getting more, we need more.

What do you think Israel thinks? If the Saudis get more, we need more.

Have you ever heard of an arms race? That is what this is. We are fueling an arms race in the Middle East. Every side wants more. You say: Well, we have to do this. We have to combat Iran.

Do you know how much the Gulf sheikhdoms, Saudi Arabia, and all their allies—the ones who are bombing the hell out of Yemen—do you know how their military spending compares to that of Iran? It is 8 to 1. All of the money is in the Gulf. All of the power, all of the weapons are in the Gulf sheikhdoms. They have more weapons and spend more on weapons—8 to 1—than Iran.

We are going to vote on Iran sanctions this week, and they say that they don't want ballistic missiles Iran. Well, I don't either. The best way to do that is to put pressure on Saudi Arabia.

How would you put pressure on Saudi Arabia? Maybe we wouldn't sell them arms. Maybe we would withhold the sale of arms until they come to the table and we get a ballistic agreement with Iran. It is a naive and foolish notion to think that Iran is going to give up on their ballistic weapons. They are never giving up on their ballistic weapons unless Saudi Arabia did the same thing.

People don't talk about this, but Saudi Arabia has ballistic missiles. They have Chinese missiles. They are called the Dongfeng-21 N-3. They have dozens of these. Do you know where they are pointed? Tehran and Tel Aviv.

Saudi Arabia is no friend of Israel. Do they cooperate with Israel some? Yes, but their missiles are pointed at Tel Aviv, Israel. Saudi Arabia's other missiles are pointed at Tehran. Are these missiles nuclear capable? Yes.

They are not thought to be nuclear tipped, meaning they haven't been armed with nuclear missiles, but everyone who is in the arms community acknowledges that these missiles could carry a nuclear payload if they were altered. They have the ability to do it.

Should we send arms to Saudi Arabia? Here is another quote from Bob Graham, and this is a paraphrase. He says that there is an abundance of evidence that the Saudis were complicit in 9/11.

Have we forgotten that 15 out of the 19 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia? Have we forgotten the missing 28 pages that they kept from the American public for over a decade? When you read those missing 28 pages, which have now been released, they tend to implicate Saudi Arabia. They tend to indicate that the attackers, particularly in San Diego, were befriended by a government agent for Saudi Arabia.

There is an abundance of information that implicates Saudi Arabia in 9/11. In fact, less than a year ago, this very Congress voted unanimously or virtually unanimously to let American citizens—the victims of 9/11, their families—sue Saudi Arabia. This is an extraordinary thing. We almost never let people sue governments, particularly foreign governments, but we voted nearly unanimously. Why? Because people still have sympathy for the 9/11 victims and their families and because people obviously believe there is some information that may implicate Saudi Arabia.

You say: Oh, no, they have changed. Well, how much could they have changed? It was only a year or two ago Hillary Clinton was writing that email saying that the Saudis are giving financial and logistical support to ISIL. Who in their right mind would sell arms to Saudi Arabia under those circumstances?

If it doesn't persuade you that the Saudis are supporting ISIL and terrorism and may have been part of 9/11, perhaps we should look not only at the humanitarian disaster in Yemen—what they are doing to the public and that their goal basically is famine, to bring them to submission—but perhaps we should also look at Saudi Arabia as a country. Perhaps we should look at the human rights record of Saudi Arabia.

I will give you a couple of instances of what it is like to live in Saudi Arabia. There was a young girl who was 19 years old. They haven't named her because her story is so traumatic. She was 19 years old. They call her the Girl of Qatif. She was 19 years old, and she was raped by 7 men.

The men were punished, a couple of years in prison. You know what happened? They arrested the victim because, you see, in Saudi Arabia it is your fault if you are raped. In Saudi Arabia, rape victims are arrested, put in prison, and publicly whipped. She was given 6 months in prison and 200 lashes. That was her sentence.

Ultimately, it did not come to the fore. Do you know why? Partly because

the United States stood up and said it was wrong and partly because, perhaps behind the scenes, we said: Maybe we are not going to sell you weapons if you behave like a bunch of barbarians.

I will tell you another story about Ali al Nimr, a Shiite. The Middle East is somewhat divided between Sunni and Shia. He is a Shiite. They are about 10 percent of the public in Saudi Arabia. They are the minority. They are treated like dirt. His uncle was a sheikh. And by all accounts, he was one who called for peaceful elections, who wasn't an advocate of violence. He never was known or seen to have a weapon but was executed by the Saudis for leading protests. He was executed for standing up in front of people and saying: We should have elections. We should not have this authoritarian government that lords it over us and does not allow us even to practice our religion in public.

Ali's uncle was beheaded. Ali was 17 at the time. It was the beginning of the Arab Spring, and Ali got excited and motivated. If you see the pictures of him, it is heartbreaking. You see pictures of him in western clothing. He liked poetry. He liked music. He was, by all means, the kind of person that we wish would come to leadership in Saudi Arabia.

At 17, he went to a rally and he chose to be part of the Arab Spring to say: We don't want authoritarianism. We don't want despots. We don't want Kings and all of their lording over us. We want elections.

For that, he was arrested and put on death row. Death row in Saudi Arabia, being Saudi Arabia, includes beheading and crucifixion. That will be his sentence—beheading and crucifixion.

This is the regime that you are being asked to send weapons to. People say: Oh, they are buying them.

The technology is ours. It is American technology that was developed for the defense of this country, and the companies would never have the technology had we not paid them to have it. The American taxpayer has a right to that technology, and while for almost every other good in the marketplace the government has no right to tell you how who to sell it to, arms are different because they are all developed by the U.S. taxpayer.

I do believe there should be rules about who gets our arms. I don't think we should sell them to Saudi Arabia if they might wind up in the hands of ISIS. I don't think we should sell them to Saudi Arabia if they punish people for protests, if they punish people for speaking out by beheading them and crucifying them.

I am not for selling them a rifle, much less precision-guided missiles. Some will say: Oh if we give them more accurate missiles, they will kill civilians. That presumes they are not targeting civilians.

Do you think it was a mistake? Do you think they accidentally bombed a funeral procession? Do you think their

intelligence was so bad they didn't know it was a funeral procession? They killed 125 people at a funeral. They wounded 500. We wonder about why we have so much terrorism. Yes, maybe some hate us inherently, but some of it is blowback to policy.

Do you think the people who died or the people who survived or the relatives of those who died in that funeral procession will ever forget it? They will remember it 100 years from now.

The problem we face is that terrorism goes on and on as long as we keep supporting despots who treat their people like crap, who sentence them to beheading and crucifixion, who are starving their neighboring country, which is one of the poorest nations on the planet Earth.

We are not getting better. We are not getting any closer to peace by supporting the Saudis. It is a huge mistake. The Girl of Qatif, a rape victim, was sentenced to prison and 70 lashes. Ali al Nimr, still on death row, was sentenced to beheading and crucifixion. Raif Badawi, who is he? I don't know much about him, but he is an outspoken blogger. He is somebody who writes his opinion and may have opinions that may not be orthodox. For that, the Saudis arrested him, and he is in jail for 10 years, and he is sentenced to a thousand lashes.

I don't think you can survive a thousand lashes, so the Saudis—in their great humanity—are dividing his treatment into 10 doses. He has already had 100 publicly applied. He has 900 more to go.

Shouldn't we think a little bit about supplying arms to this country? If the human rights aspect of this is not enough, I think we should probably think about the region. There is a problem in the Middle East. There is conflict. Some of it goes very deep.

Those who live in the Middle East member the Battle of Karbala in 680 A.D., when a grandson of Muhammad and Khalifa came together and had a battle. They still remember, and they are still unhappy about a battle from 680 A.D.; they have long memories.

I am reminded of what one Afghan told a reporter or a soldier recently. He said: You have all the watches, but we have all the time. They live there and have for centuries and will be there when we are gone. They have to fix their own problems. We can occasionally say that we are going to help some people destroy an evil empire or an evil group like ISIS, yes, but the people fighting—the people on the ground—need to be the people who live there. It cannot be foreigners, and it cannot be people whom they consider to be pagans or it is never going to work. Yet we are foolish if we do not look at the repercussions of what it means to sell arms to Saudi Arabia.

How will Iran react?

I was in a committee hearing the other day, and one of the Senators said: We do not care how Iran reacts. We do not care what it thinks.

By golly, we ought to if we are going to put sanctions on them. Doesn't that mean we care enough that we are trying to modulate and change their behavior? The whole idea of sanctions means that we do care about what Iran thinks. It does not mean we agree with it, it does not mean we condone it, and it does not mean we say Iran is right. But, certainly, we do care about what it thinks. What do you think Iran thinks about supplying arms to Saudi Arabia? It thinks: We need more.

Saudi arms alone are the third biggest in the world now. It is the United States, which is as big as the next 10 combined. Then, it is China. Then, it is Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has these other gulf sheikhdoms, despots. They are all allies of ours. There are about five or six of them, and, altogether, they have eight times more weapons than Iran. So we are complaining—I think, justifiably so—because we worry about the mischief of Iran in the Middle East. We are complaining about that, and we want them to change their behavior.

What do you think is the prime reason they create weapons and are creating the ballistic missiles?

Some of it is because they fear our invasion, like in Iraq, but I think a great deal of why Iran develops weapons is its fear of Saudi Arabia. In fact, when you look back at Iraq and the whole weapons of mass destruction that never existed, one of the interesting stories is that—it may be a theory, but I think it has some evidence—Saddam Hussein pretended, valiantly, that he had weapons of mass destruction not to deter us but to deter Iran. Here is Saddam Hussein, sending all of these smoke signals up that he has weapons of mass destruction because he wants to keep Iran at bay.

We think everything is about us, and we never acknowledge that maybe some of it is about the regional politics. When we give weapons or sell weapons to Saudi Arabia, there will be, for every action, a reaction. There will be significantly more pressure for Iran to come forward and have more weapons.

What does it do to our ally Israel?

There have been at least a few reports that say Israel believes that, every time we give a dollar to Saudi Arabia, they need to respond with a dollar and a half. There was a quote from one of their government ministers on this, which reads that he worries about their qualitative edge.

I have a quote here from a colleague of mine—a friend of mine—who is a rabbi and a friend of the Constitution.

Rabbi Nate Segal writes:

While I understand the President's intentions, we must proceed with great caution due to the challenges and the history of the region. At this time, I don't see the benefits of the arms deal for the United States or Israel.

This is coming from someone who believes, with every fiber of his being, that Israel should be defended. He is

worried that, by giving weapons to Saudi Arabia, it detracts from the qualitative edge that Israel currently has.

Imagine what would happen if the Government of Saudi Arabia were overthrown. They have billions and billions of dollars of weapons. Many of these weapons are the most sophisticated weapons we have. Is there a chance that they could be overthrown? I don't know. They behead their citizens and crucify them. Do you think anybody who lives in Saudi Arabia might have some pent-up anger for the regime?

William Wilberforce once said of slavery: "In having heard all this, you can choose to look the other way, but you can never say that you didn't know."

I love that statement because so many people at the time of slavery looked away. They just said: It is something we do. It is part of our time. It is part of our age.

So many people knew the horror of slavery. So many people knew the horror of what was happening to a people, and they looked away.

I think, in having heard of the impending famine in Yemen, in having seen Ali, and in having heard of the impending famine, you can choose to look away. Many in this body will, today, choose to look away.

They will say: Do you know what? Saudi Arabia gives us some benefit sometime, and we hate Iran more. So let's just give some more weapons to Saudi Arabia.

They will be looking away from the human rights tragedy that is central to Saudi Arabia's whole being. They will be looking away from the fact that Saudi Arabia was supporting ISIS in the Syrian civil war. They will be looking away from the fact that the Saudi blockade is starving Yemeni children.

Do you know what? I choose not to look away. Today I stand up for the thousands of civilians who are being killed in Yemen. Today I stand up for the millions of voiceless children in Yemen who will be killed by the Saudi blockade. Today I stand up for saying that we, the United States, should no longer be fueling the arms race in the Middle East. It has come to no good. The wars and the rage and the anger are thousands of years old. We will never get to the bottom of it. We should defend ourselves at all costs. We should be very careful as to whom is admitted into the country, and we should not get involved in every civil war in every misbegotten part of the planet.

It is my hope and my prayer that enough Americans will wake up and say that we are tired of war, that we are tired of funding every war on the globe, and that we are tired of sacrificing our young in every civil war.

Today this will be a bipartisan vote. There will be a large contingent from the other side of the aisle and a small contingent from this side. This is important. This is a rare day in Senate

history, when we actually have the chance to stop an evil, but we will stop this evil by sending a loud message to the President and a loud message to Saudi Arabia that we are not going to blindly support the arms race.

We are not going to be blind to your human rights transgressions, and we are not going to blindly give you weapons in the face of beheading your citizens and crucifying them.

Today I take a stand for those who do not have a voice, and I hope the Senate will think long and hard and will vote against this arms sale to Saudi Arabia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me say at the outset that I support the position from the Senator from Kentucky. I believe that what he has said about the situation between the United States and Saudi Arabia is timely and needs to be heard. People across the United States and around the world should be aware of the fact that we are witnessing four famines across this world. One of them is in Yemen, and three others are on the continent of Africa. This is a famine that is created not by drought, not by national defense, but by human disaster—by a war that has been created and is one that has been pushed largely by the Saudis at the expense of the people—the innocent people—who live in the country of Yemen.

What the Senator from Kentucky is basically calling on all of us to do is to ask: What role is the United States playing in Saudi Arabia's aggressive activities? Should we be more vigilant in our knowing that what we are selling them is being used in ways that are inconsistent with the values of the United States of America? We know the record of the Saudi monarchy when it comes to human rights, and the Senator from Kentucky has spoken to that quite eloquently. We know what they have done to their own people, to the people who live in their country, and to those who seek to have the basic freedoms that we take for granted in America.

We also know that, when it comes to the Saudi activity of promoting their version—the most extreme version—of Islam, they have been guilty of promulgating Wahhabism, which has led to extreme forms of the Muslim faith in some places in the world. Those are realities.

We know the reality of 9/11. When we traced the origins of those who came and killed 3,000 innocent Americans, too many roads led back to Riyadh; too many roads led back to Saudi Arabia. So why can't we be more open and honest in our relationship with this country?

The Senator from Kentucky has told us this morning that the amendment that will be offered shortly by him and by Senator MURPHY is one that calls on the Senate to take an honest look at Saudi Arabia today and its relationship with the United States.

May I add one other element on a personal basis?

It is so rare on the floor of the Senate to see what we have just seen this morning—a proposal for an amendment to be debated and an amendment to be voted on on the floor of the Senate. I can count on one hand how many times that has happened this year in the Senate. What used to be the most deliberative body in America—the great debating society and so forth—has turned into a place of rubberstamps and unanimous consents. I am glad—win or lose in our effort here on this amendment—that the Senator is bringing this important issue to the floor. I thank him for making it a bipartisan effort in the process.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, what I have come to the floor to speak to is another issue that really calls on the Senate and asks the basic question: Why are we here?

I think we know that we were elected to make America a better nation and to help families across this Nation realize the great opportunity and goodness of this Nation.

One of the issues that most people worry about the most in their daily lives is healthcare. They should. Many times, I have said on the floor that, if you have ever been in a position in your life as a father of a seriously sick child and have had no health insurance when that has happened, you will never forget that as long as you live. I know. I have been there. I went through a period of time with my wife, in raising our daughter, when she needed the best medical care in America, and we did not have any health insurance. It was frightening to think what would happen to our little girl because we did not have the protection of health insurance and the quality care that everybody wants for themselves and for the people they love.

At this moment in time, we are in a debate about the future of healthcare in America—the future of health insurance in America. I cannot think of a more serious topic. People say: Well, it is one-sixth of the American economy—our healthcare system. That is critically important. Even more so, this is such a personal matter for every individual.

The Affordable Care Act, which was passed 6 or 7 years ago, I was proud to vote for. We couldn't get any support from the other side of the aisle—not one single vote, not one Republican vote in support of it. Our goal, of course, with the Affordable Care Act was to reduce the number of Americans who were uninsured when it came to health insurance. We achieved a major part of our goal. The rate of uninsured in health insurance in America was cut in half by the Affordable Care Act. We expanded opportunities for health insurance through the Medicaid Program, as well as through private insurance exchanges, which were moved in the right direction.

We also said something else in that we wanted to build into the health insurance system of America protections for families. We wanted to make sure that you could not be discriminated against in buying health insurance simply because someone in your family had been sick. Think of how many of us—one out of three, I might add—have preexisting conditions or of someone in our family who has a preexisting condition. It happens—a child surviving cancer, a child with diabetes, somebody in the family who has a heart condition. Those are the realities of life for families across America.

Before the passage of the Affordable Care Act, the health insurance companies could say not only no to you but, really, no when it came to coverage, or they could charge you premiums that were way beyond what people could afford to pay. We eliminated that in the Affordable Care Act—eliminated it. You cannot discriminate against an American on the basis of his having a preexisting medical condition.

The insurance companies went wild in defining what a preexisting condition was that might raise your premiums or to deny you coverage. Having had acne in your adolescence was a preexisting condition. The fact that you were a woman who might give birth to a child was a preexisting condition. The list went on and on. We eliminated that and said that you cannot discriminate against Americans because of those things.

We have people on the other side who have said that we have to get rid of that protection. If we do, what will happen to all of these people?

On Saturday, I went to a march in Chicago, in Lincoln Park. It was the Children's Heart Foundation and the congenital heart defect alliance. Of course, it speaks for itself. The No. 1 birth defect among children in America is a heart defect, and 1 out of 100 babies born has a heart problem. These are kids with preexisting conditions. You should have seen the families show up in big, big numbers, supporting little kids—some of them just babies. They were proudly wearing T-shirts, standing up, and saying that we are going to fight for this little boy or little girl. They were trying to promote medical research to save their lives.

It is something that really touched me as I looked at 600 people on that hot Saturday afternoon, marching in Lincoln Park in Chicago. I said to them: When it gets down to the basics in life, the most important thing in your life is your baby. The next most important thing is your family, whom you have standing behind that baby. Then there is the doctor—that doctor whom you are counting on to do everything in his power or her power to make sure your baby survives. But you need to bring into this conversation another group—politicians, Senators, and Congressmen—because we are making decisions right here in Washington that will decide whether the families who marched

in Lincoln Park in Chicago on Saturday and families like them all across America will have access to affordable health insurance, real health insurance that will cover them. That is what the debate is about.

It was just a few weeks ago that the House of Representatives passed a measure to repeal the Affordable Care Act and to replace it. At the end of the day, not a single Democrat voted for the measure. It passed by two votes—two votes—in the House of Representatives.

When they came back and analyzed what the Republicans had voted for in the House of Representatives when it came to healthcare, here is what they found: Their proposal to eliminate the Affordable Care Act—the one that passed the House of Representatives several weeks ago—according to the Congressional Budget Office—a non-partisan, expert group—according to the CBO, 23 million Americans will lose their health insurance under the plan that passed the House of Representatives. In my State of Illinois, with 12.5 million people in our population, 1 million people would lose their health insurance.

I will just tell my colleagues, I don't see how any Member of Congress can stand before us and say: I have a great solution for healthcare in America. We are going to take health insurance away from 23 million people. But that is what the vote did. And their vote, sadly, eliminated the protection against discrimination because of preexisting conditions.

So what has been the reaction to the House repeal bill that was passed? I can tell my colleagues that in my State there is not a single group, not one medical advocacy group, who supports what the House of Representatives did.

I am from downstate Illinois, outside the city of Chicago. I have a congressional district down there in smalltown America, great people. If you went into that part of Illinois and said to them "I am going to vote for a measure that is going to put in jeopardy the future of your local hospital," the people would literally rise up to resist it.

The Illinois Hospital Association tells us that the Affordable Care Act repeal passed by the House of Representatives endangers hospital services all across our State but especially in small towns and in rural America. They estimate that we are going to lose 60,000 jobs at these hospitals in our State. I can tell you what those hospital jobs are in smalltown America, in rural America. They are the best jobs in the community. These are medical experts, doctors and nurses and supervisors and administrators who keep these hospitals operating, and they are paid well to do it, and they should be. Those are the jobs at risk of being eliminated by the vote in the House of Representatives.

One million people in our State could lose health insurance, and our hospitals are threatened with closure.

That is why the Illinois Hospital Association opposes what the Republicans did in the House of Representatives, and that is why the Illinois State Medical Society—our doctors—and the Chicago Medical Society have come out against what happened in the House of Representatives. That is why the nurses have opposed what was passed in the House of Representatives as well. Not a single medical advocacy group supports what happened in the House of Representatives. Not one in my State. Can't find one of them.

So now we remember from basic civics that after it passes the House, it is our turn in the Senate. What are we going to do with healthcare reform? Well, I wish I could tell you. We are told we are going to vote on it. Maybe as soon as 2 weeks from now, we will come to the floor and vote on changing the healthcare system of the United States of America.

What is the proposal of the Republicans in the Senate when it comes to the future of our healthcare system in America? I don't know, and the reason I don't know is it is being done in secret. There have been no committee hearings, no opportunity to offer amendments. In fact, we haven't even seen the measure we are going to be asked to vote on in 2 weeks.

The Congressional Budget Office, which is supposed to analyze it, hasn't published any analysis of the Republican plan. Yet they are moving forward at a breakneck pace to have us vote on it, up or down, before we leave for the Fourth of July recess. It is a frightening prospect.

They will do it under what is known as reconciliation. I won't bore people with Senate procedure, but what it basically means is they can move it through with a simple majority vote in the U.S. Senate. Amendments will be considered on what they call a vote-arama basis. And if it sounds like some kind of a game, it is almost a game. You offer an amendment and you get perhaps 1 minute to explain your amendment on changing healthcare in America, and the other side gets 1 minute to explain their opposition, and off you go to a vote and then another one and another one. Your head is spinning, trying to figure out what in the world each of these amendments and each of these votes is going to mean. Those are the measures to be taken by the Senate when it comes to healthcare.

This is exactly the opposite of what happened when the Affordable Care Act was passed. We adopted 160 Republican amendments to the Affordable Care Act. None of them voted for final passage, but 160 amendments were offered by Republicans to change it, and they were adopted. It was a bipartisan process on the amendments.

How many amendments will we be able to offer to the Republican Senate proposal that is going to come before us in 2 weeks? The answer is that we don't know because we have never seen

the Republican proposal. It has been done in secret. Thirteen Republican Senators were chosen by the majority leader to sit in private and come up with this bill. There was no open committee hearing, no open discussion. Some Republicans were invited in, and some were not. We don't know what the ultimate product will look like, but I can tell you this: Whatever the Republican Senators come up with, it is going to have a dramatic impact on each and every single American, every one of us in our communities back home.

I know this idea of repealing the Affordable Care Act in 2 weeks is a solemn political promise that many Republicans made, but they also made a promise to the people they represent to do what they can to help these families through their difficult times. That is why we need to make sure the product that is passed by the Republicans in the Senate is one that serves the needs of people across the United States of America.

If this product coming from the Republicans is like the House measure that takes away health insurance for 23 million Americans, then I can understand why the Republicans want to do this in secret. I can understand why they don't want us to see it until the very last minute and then vote on it and get out of town as fast as they can, because it is an embarrassment to think that the U.S. Senate and the House, for that matter, would vote to take away health insurance from 23 million Americans. That is a dereliction of duty, and from where I am sitting, it is just flat immoral to take away health insurance from that many people.

What if we end up with a product like the House of Representatives' that jeopardizes rural hospitals and hospitals in the inner cities, that closes down these community healthcare clinics, reduces access. Well, I will tell you what will happen. People without health insurance will still show up at the hospital sick, in the emergency room, and they will still be treated, but they won't be able to pay for it. Who will pay for their care? We will pay for their care. Everyone else with health insurance will pay more because people who are uninsured will receive free medical care. That is the reality. And, of course, if you don't have a regular doctor or a regular medical home, as they call it these days, what started off as a minor problem could turn into a major problem, even life-threatening. That is why the Affordable Care Act builds into it community healthcare clinics and opportunities to create a medical home.

When I met with the Chicago Medical Society at a convention they had in Chicago this last week, I was surprised by a few things. First, I was surprised to learn that out of the 5,000 physicians in the Chicago Medical Society, they received responses back from over 1,000 who said they thought the measure

that passed the House of Representatives—the Republican repeal bill—was the worst news they had heard when it came to the future of healthcare. They preferred the Affordable Care Act. But they went on to say something that may surprise people. These doctors—over 1,000 of them responding to the survey—said they thought it was time for us to talk about very significant changes to our healthcare system in America. They are tired of fighting the private insurance companies. What they suggested is that we look at a plan like Medicare for all.

Right now, Medicare serves 50 million or 60 million Americans. People can't wait to turn 65 and finally qualify for Medicare, with no exclusions for preexisting conditions, and they know that Medicare is going to give them quality care, and it is not going to bankrupt them as individuals.

These doctors in the Chicago area have said it is now time for America to seriously look at Medicare for all, and I agree with them. I think it is time to look at it because the private health insurance system, even as we have tried to save it, salvage it, remake it through the Affordable Care Act, has real shortcomings.

I hope those on the other side who are considering changes in our healthcare system will actually listen to doctors, listen to hospital administrators, and listen to the families they represent. Why they are doing this in secrecy, why they are refusing to give us a chance for committee hearings and amendments I can't tell you, other than the obvious: Clearly, what they have come up with is something they don't believe the American people will accept, so they need to push it through without disclosure at the last minute and get out of town in the hopes that people won't blame them.

Well, when it comes to healthcare, people don't forget. I won't forget, and the people of Illinois won't forget the votes that were cast in the House of Representatives which threaten to take away health insurance from 1 million people in my State.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished senior Senator from Illinois for his comments. Certainly we hear those same things in town meetings in Vermont.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. President, on another matter, this afternoon, Attorney General Sessions will return to the Senate for the first time since his confirmation hearing. It has been more than 3 months since the press revealed that the Attorney General gave false testimony in response to questions from both myself and from Senator FRANKEN about his contact with Russian officials; yet the Attorney General has made no effort to come back before the Judiciary Committee to explain these actions—actions that some could construe as perjury.

There are now countless new and troubling questions swirling around the Attorney General. In fact, he was scheduled to appear before the Appropriations Committee this morning—a committee that would have to vote on his request for a budget—but, for the second time in as many months, he abruptly canceled. Neither I nor Senator FRANKEN sit on the Intelligence Committee, so we are not going to have the opportunity to follow up with the Attorney General in person. I am not going to be able to ask him why he hid his contacts with the Russian Ambassador, including a reported third meeting at the Mayflower Hotel, nor will I be able to ask about the timing of his recusal or his involvement with the Russia investigation both before his recusal and after. I will not be able to ask whether the President ever suggested he intervene in the Russia investigation in any way. And especially I will not be able to ask how the Attorney General can justify violating his recusal from the Russia investigation by working to fire its lead investigator.

The American people deserve answers to each of these questions—not only answers, they deserve truthful answers. That is why I shared my questions for Attorney General Sessions on these topics. But I also shared them with members of the Intelligence Committee.

So, at least, on the plus side, Attorney General Sessions will finally face some serious questions, but I am still concerned he is not going to be the most forthcoming witness. We saw last week that Trump administration officials have invented a brand new claim of privilege to insulate themselves from congressional oversight—and to protect themselves from giving answers that would be embarrassing or damaging to the President.

I asked the Congressional Research Service to provide me with a list of valid reasons to refuse to answer a question from a Senator. There is executive privilege, of course, but it has to be invoked by the President, and it is not absolute. Of course, there are also constitutional privileges, such as the Fifth Amendment right to not incriminate oneself. Even in my days as prosecutor, I strongly protected the rights of people, no matter what crime they were charged with, to take the Fifth Amendment if they wanted to, but there is no “I would rather not answer” privilege. That is not in the Fifth Amendment. That is not an executive privilege. Unless it necessarily involves disclosing classified information, the answer “I would rather discuss this behind closed doors” is not a valid response either. That is really not a valid response. That is just trying to get out of answering questions.

The Attorney General’s spokesperson said yesterday that Attorney General Sessions “believes it is important for the American people to hear the truth directly from him and [he] looks forward to answering the committee’s

questions.” Yet it was also reported yesterday he plans to invoke executive privilege in response to some inquiries. If true, the Attorney General is speaking out of both sides of his mouth.

I hope the Attorney General is not going to allow President Trump to follow the precedent of Richard Nixon and go down the path of invoking executive privilege to stop an inquiry into illegal or unethical conduct. These questions need to be answered. The American people deserve the truth. They deserve an Attorney General who is held accountable for his leadership of the Justice Department, not one who is embroiled in controversy and hides from the congressional committee of oversight jurisdiction of his Department.

We must not lose sight of the fact that our democracy was attacked. It was attacked by a country that has no respect for us. If we do not take this seriously, we will be attacked again. We must know exactly how that happened so we can protect our democratic institutions and protect our country. This goes way beyond the Republican or the Democratic parties. That includes knowing whether members of the Trump campaign enabled Russian interference.

Russia is not a friend. Just as they have tried to interfere with elections in some of the NATO countries in other parts of the world, we know they have tried to interfere with ours. The American people also deserve to know whether the President or his administration have attempted to interfere in the Russia investigation, knowing it was improper. Any such attempt would amount to obstruction of justice.

Attorney General Sessions needs to answer critical questions today. He needs to answer for his leadership of the Justice Department in both the Senate Appropriations and the Judiciary Committees. He can keep ducking the questions, but sooner or later, the Attorney General must answer for his actions.

We deserve to know whether he is acting in the public interest—which is what an Attorney General should do—or in Donald Trump’s personal interest. If he cannot decide between those interests, if he cannot distinguish between the public’s interests and Donald Trump’s interests, well, he is not fit to serve as Attorney General.

I pointed out, when Deputy Rosenstein came before the Appropriations Committee this morning, all the things the administration were cutting out of the budget—money for victims of crime, money to go after the opioid epidemic in this country, large cuts in the FBI. I could go on and on. However, there is one place they did put in money for more lawyers. They put in money for lawyers to work taking private property of people in Texas and Arizona and elsewhere to build this wall of the President’s. So we will take out money for victims of crime or for fighting the opioid epidemic, but we will sure learn how to get money to

hire private lawyers to go after people’s private property along the Rio Grande to build a wall which will not really accomplish anything, other than to fulfill part of a campaign promise—a campaign promise to build a \$40 billion wall. The other part, of course, was to have Mexico pay for it. The check is in the mail—very, very, very slow mail.

I see—speaking of Attorneys General and people from Texas—my friend, the former attorney general of Texas, the distinguished senior Senator from Texas on the floor so I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I thank the senior Senator from Vermont for his kind words. We do agree, occasionally, about a few things. We are, in some ways I think, the odd couple when it comes to things like open government and freedom of information. We agree on those things, somebody, I would say, from the left end of the political spectrum and somebody like me from the right end of the political spectrum, which I find particularly gratifying, but there are a lot of other things we have different views on. That is not unusual or to be unexpected, but I enjoy working with him when we can find those areas of common ground to work on.

IRAN SANCTIONS BILL

Mr. President, last night, the Senate voted to move forward with tough, new sanctions to hold Iran accountable for its continued support of terrorism. The unanimous vote we had is a strong message to the world that the United States will not tolerate Iran’s complicity on terror and a clear indicator of just how important this legislation is.

Just last month, Secretary of State Tillerson noted that “Iran remains a leading state sponsor of terror.” I would amend that slightly and say it is “the” leading state sponsor of terror.

The Secretary said he would be undertaking a review of the success or failure of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—what we know as the lopsided nuclear deal President Obama inked with Iran—because, unfortunately, as we have seen, the Obama administration’s deal, relative to Iran’s nuclear aspirations, did zero—zero—to stop Iran’s investment in terrorism around the world. As a matter of fact, it generated quite a bit of new cash which Iran could use to pay for acts of terrorism around the world. So the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear deal, all but cemented the status of the state sponsor of terrorism as a future nuclear power.

I remember being in the House Chamber when Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel talked about this paving the way to Iran achieving a nuclear weapon, albeit some 10 years hence, which may seem like a long time to us, but if you are the nation of Israel, 10 years is right around the corner if you are living in that neighborhood and going to be in its crosshairs.

Part of the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear deal, released billions of dollars to the Iranian regime and empowered our adversary—our avowed enemy—to engage in even more terrorist activities abroad. Instead of weakening Iran, it actually bolstered Tehran's hostile capabilities. On top of that, President Obama pushed aside our strongest ally in the region—I mentioned Israel—in order to lay a gift at the feet of one of greatest antagonists of the United States, with little or no benefit to our Nation. That is why it is no surprise Iran continues to violate international restrictions against ballistic missile testing and illicit arms transfers, flying in the face of any promises that were made in the agreement.

Last year, then-Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, confirming what we had all feared: “Iran’s ballistic missiles are inherently capable of delivering [weapons of mass destruction], and Tehran already has the largest inventory of ballistic missiles in the Middle East.”

Under President Obama’s nuclear deal, their conventional inventory and capability are essentially free to grow, and grow they have.

So what kind of deal was the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear deal? It was a lopsided deal. More importantly, it was a dangerous deal as well.

Of course, Iran’s reach goes far beyond their own border. They support the Assad regime in Syria and the Houthi rebellion in Yemen, two groups which have continually encouraged violence against Americans and even murder of their own citizens.

Last month, on his way to Saudi Arabia, Secretary of Defense James Mattis confirmed that Iranian-supplied missiles were being fired by the Houthis into Saudi Arabia. So not only is Iran breaking the nuclear deal but also U.N. Security Council resolutions as well.

In Syria, Iran continues to prop up and shield the Butcher of Damascus, Bashar al-Assad, even after he has brutally used chemical weapons against his own people. Some 400,000 Syrians, at last count, have lost their lives in the Syrian civil war, supported by Iran, supported by Russia, propping up this butcher who is head of the regime.

So last night’s show of bipartisan support is more than just a message of unity against terrorism; it is a sign the Senate will fight to stop Iran from tightening its grip on power. The legislation we will pass this week introduces new sanctions and embargoes on Iran.

First, it imposes new restrictions on persons who transact with and support Iran’s ballistic missile programs, giving our President authority to impose sanctions on their weapons providers.

The legislation also makes clear that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps bears responsibility for destabilizing activities and terrorism in the region by extending new sanctions to them as well.

This bill also addresses Iran’s human rights abuses by directing the Secretary of State to submit a list of people who are guilty of human rights violations so we can take further action against them.

Lastly, it reaffirms the arms embargo by allowing the President to block the property of any person or entity involved in the supply, sale, or transfer of prohibited arms and related materiel to and from Iran.

I also submitted yesterday an amendment to this Iranian sanctions legislation that targets Mahan Air, which is Iran’s largest commercial airline. As a transporter of terrorists and weapons, Mahan Air is nothing more than a commercial coverup for terrorist activities, and, with routes in and out of Europe, it is essential for us to stop their continued expansion and to understand how their activities bear on the safety of American lives.

I am thankful for Chairman CORKER’s leadership on the Iran and now Russia sanctions bill, and the expediency in which we are moving forward. While we can’t, in this bill, undo all of the harm caused by the foreign policy of the Obama administration, we can work to correct course, and I am glad we are doing so in a bipartisan way. Last night’s vote was a sign of unity, and I am looking forward to getting this legislation through the Senate and onto the President’s desk.

Mr. President, I wish to take a moment and talk about the Saudi arms sale, which we will be voting on this afternoon at about 2:30 or in that timeframe. We know Saudi Arabia remains under threat from the violent ambitions of Iran, which I just got through speaking about, but that is not just a threat to us, it is a threat in the region, particularly to Sunni allies like Saudi Arabia.

A stronger Saudi Arabia will provide a powerful deterrent to Iranian aggression. This particular sale of weapons, announced by the President when he was in Saudi Arabia a couple weeks ago, will help provide greater regional stability to pushing back the advancing tide of Iranian-backed terrorism. It will help against Iranian-backed Houthis’ weak government control, which allows terrorism to flourish in the region.

Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula has been described by U.S. officials as the most active and dangerous affiliate of al-Qaida today, with several thousands of adherents and fighters inside of Yemen supported by the Iranian regime. AQAP, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, has continued to take advantage of the political and security vacuum. This arms sale will also bolster the kingdom’s ability to provide for its own security and continue contributing to counterterrorism operations across the region, thereby reducing the burden on the United States and our own military forces by equipping them to do their own security and not depend on us.

The sale will also help deter regional threats and enhance the kingdom’s ability to protect its borders, contribute to coalition counterterrorism operations, and target bad actors more precisely.

Finally, it will improve the kingdom’s defensive military capabilities. Since 2015, Saudi Arabia has intercepted more than 40 missiles fired at the kingdom by Iranian-backed Houthi militias. Nine of these missiles have struck Saudi territory itself.

I look forward to voting in the 2:30 timeframe this afternoon against the resolution of disapproval filed by our colleague. I think it is important for us to help our allies defend themselves, to fill a power vacuum left that would otherwise be filled by U.S. forces and military effort.

I think it sends a strong message to Iran and their affiliates in the Middle East that we will not stand quietly or stand silently in the face of the continued growth of their terrorist activities and support for terrorist activities around the world.

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. YOUNG. 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. YOUNG. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor today to express my support for S.J. Res. 42 and my opposition to the transfer of specific defense articles to the Government of Saudi Arabia. I have arrived at this decision after extensive research and careful deliberation. I would like to state very clearly for the record why I have come to this decision. I have decided to support S.J. Res. 42 and oppose the transfer of specific defense articles to Saudi Arabia primarily because of the Saudi Government’s refusal to take specific steps that I repeatedly requested to alleviate the horrible humanitarian suffering in Yemen.

Before I further explain that decision, I would like to explain what is not informing my decision. I am not reflexively opposed to arms sales in general or to Saudi Arabia specifically. On the contrary, after a series of questions are satisfactorily addressed, I believe arm sales to key partners and allies can enable them to more effectively defend our common interests and oppose common threats. After all, the United States cannot and should not employ U.S. military forces in every instance. When the United States and our partners confront common threats, we should encourage and empower regional allies and regional partners to play prominent roles wherever possible. When our partners are defending our common interests, we want them to be as well-equipped and well-trained and effective as possible.

I recognize that despite our differences, the Saudi Government is an important regional security partner for the United States of America. However, when we work through our allies and partners, we shouldn't set aside our national security interests, and we certainly shouldn't set aside our support for universal humanitarian principles. That principle certainly applies to the Saudis and to the situation in Yemen.

My decision today is based neither on an opposition to arms sales in general nor an opposition to arms sales to the Saudis in particular. Instead, my decision today is based primarily on the persistent and misguided refusal of the Saudi Government to take specific steps that I have requested to alleviate some of the humanitarian suffering in Yemen.

My decision should come as a surprise to no one. As I have said on the Senate floor before, the United Nations calls the situation in Yemen the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. According to the U.N.—which, incidentally, our intelligence resources rely on for much of their information—Yemen has almost 19 million people. Two-thirds of the population is in need of humanitarian or protection assistance, including approximately 10 million who require immediate assistance to save or sustain their lives—two-thirds of their population. If that is not a recipe for instability in a dangerous region of the world, I don't know what is. So 17 million people are food-insecure, while 7 million people don't know where their next meal is coming from, and they are at risk of famine.

In addition, according to the U.N. as of yesterday, the World Health Organization reports a cumulative total of over 124,000 suspected cases of cholera and over 900 associated deaths. Cholera is impacting the most vulnerable. In fact, children under the age of 15 account for 28 percent of all deaths.

The situation is growing far worse. An NGO with personnel on the ground in Yemen tells my office that the large majority of these cholera cases have taken place since late April. Perhaps the most heartbreaking statistic is that a child under the age of 5 dies of preventable causes every 10 minutes in Yemen.

Throughout this process, rather than just mourning this terrible situation, I have tried to identify tangible steps that can save lives, that can lead to a political settlement in Yemen, and that can enhance both regional and national security interests of the United States. In the case of Yemen, it became clear quickly that there were specific steps the Saudis could take to help alleviate the horrible humanitarian situation in Yemen.

Based on that realization back in April—April 27, I led a nine-member, bipartisan letter to the incoming Saudi Ambassador, noting the important security partnership between the United States and the Government of Saudi

Arabia and Saudi Arabia's role as a regional leader. I asked Riyadh to take some specific steps related to Yemen that would prevent thousands or even millions of additional people from dying there. Among several requests, I asked the Saudis to permit the delivery of U.S.-funded cranes to the Port of Hodeidah that would dramatically improve the ability to offload humanitarian supplies there. That is important because the Port of Hodeidah processes roughly 70 to 80 percent of all of the food and other critical imports that come into the country of Yemen. This is the port that supplies people who are in the most desperate need of food and medical attention.

I also asked Riyadh to address unnecessary additional delays that the Saudi-led coalition was causing for humanitarian and commercial supplies going into that port. Not receiving a satisfactory response, I subsequently raised these issues directly with the Saudi Foreign Minister when he met with me and other Senators here on Capitol Hill. Still not receiving a satisfactory answer, we have continued to raise these requests repeatedly with the Saudi Embassy. As recently as yesterday, the Saudis have refused to be responsive on the cranes. Further, in the face of clear evidence from the United Nations to the contrary, the Saudis have even denied a role in causing delays of humanitarian and commercial shipments into Yemen. So for almost 2 months, the Saudis have failed to take my requests seriously.

For those who are new to this issue, perhaps this discussion of cranes and delays at ports seems a bit wonkish—maybe in the weeds. Yet in a humanitarian situation as dire as Yemen—with a child under 5 dying of preventable diseases every 10 minutes—every shipment of food or fuel, every day of delay can have life-and-death implications. The Saudis know this, yet they have been unresponsive to my requests.

There is no doubt that the Iranians and the Houthis are up to no good in Yemen. There is no doubt that Saudi Arabia has the right to defend its borders, and there is also no doubt that this situation in Yemen is complex. But it is a false choice to suggest that we have to choose between opposing Iran and helping the millions of suffering people in Yemen. I believe we have a moral responsibility and a national security imperative to do all we can to help the people in Yemen who are starving, who need medicine, who are dying.

The longer this war in Yemen continues, the more we will drive the Houthis into the arms of the Iranians. The more leverage the Iranians and the Russians will gain in Yemen, the more terrorist groups like al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula will thrive.

Perhaps the Saudi Government isn't concerned about my vote. Perhaps they think this issue will just blow over, that attention will wane, that Senators will lose interest. I recognize I am just

one Senator with just one vote, but I would caution the Saudi Government against such a view. I am not going to be losing interest in this issue anytime soon.

To the Saudis I say this: When I make a request and your government is unresponsive—at least as far as I am concerned—there will be consequences for that decision. My vote demonstrates that fact.

To my colleagues, I respectfully say that America's support should never be unconditional. It is in our interests and it is consistent with the humanitarian values that we profess to demand that the Saudis take some of these steps to alleviate humanitarian suffering in Yemen. For this reason, I am going to vote in support of S.J. Res. 42 today, and I urge my colleagues, Republican and Democrat, to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

MR. SANDERS. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of the Murphy-Paul-Franken resolution of disapproval and to outline my concerns about the unfettered sale of arms to Saudi Arabia. The Saudi-led war in Yemen has created a humanitarian disaster in one of the region's poorest countries. Many thousands of civilians have been killed, many more made homeless, and millions are at risk of starvation, according to the United Nations refugee agency. The chaos in Yemen has also been strategically disastrous for the United States, providing fertile ground for extremist groups like al-Qaida and ISIS and creating new opportunities for Iranian intervention.

In addition to being morally indefensible and strategically shortsighted, the Trump administration's unconditional support for the Saudi coalition, including billions of dollars in arms sales, risks dragging the United States into yet another war in the Middle East.

These are the reasons I strongly support the resolution of disapproval offered by my colleagues and their effort to block some of these arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

I also think it is long past time that we begin to take a very hard look at our relationship with Saudi Arabia. This is a country that is run by a hereditary monarchy in which women are treated as third-class citizens.

I would like to mention for a moment the case of Loujain Alhathloul, a Saudi Arabian human rights activist who was arrested at King Fahd International Airport on June 4. She has been an advocate for women's rights in Saudi Arabia.

In 2014, she was arrested for defying the country's ban—are you ready for this—on women drivers and imprisoned for 73 days.

In 2015, she ran as a candidate in a local council election—the third in the nation's modern history and the first in which women were allowed to both

vote and run—even though her name was never added to the ballot.

More recently, Alhathloul criticized a Saudi Government-sponsored women's empowerment summit, which was attended by Ivanka Trump, for its lack of inclusiveness.

While she has now been released from jail—and I am very glad to hear that—this is no way to treat a peaceful dissident. The human rights organization Amnesty International reported that during her detention, Alhathloul was not allowed access to an attorney, nor was allowed to speak to her family.

Finally and perhaps more significantly, it is important that here on the floor of the Senate, we begin to discuss the decades-long effort by Saudi Arabia to export an ultra-reactionary form of Islam throughout the world.

A recent piece in the *Boston Globe* by Stephen Kinzer, a journalist who has covered the Middle East for many years—Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have his article printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the *Boston Globe*, June 11, 2017]

SAUDI ARABIA IS DESTABILIZING THE WORLD

(By Stephen Kinzer)

Just a few months ago, the governor of Indonesia's largest city, Jakarta, seemed headed for easy reelection despite the fact that he is a Christian in a mostly Muslim country. Suddenly everything went violently wrong. Using the pretext of an offhand remark the governor made about the Koran, masses of enraged Muslims took to the streets to denounce him. In short order he lost the election, was arrested, charged with blasphemy, and sentenced to two years in prison.

This episode is especially alarming because Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country, has long been one of its most tolerant. Indonesian Islam, like most belief systems on that vast archipelago, is syncretic, gentle, and open-minded. The stunning fall of Jakarta's governor reflects the opposite: intolerance, sectarian hatred, and contempt for democracy. Fundamentalism is surging in Indonesia. This did not happen naturally.

Saudi Arabia has been working for decades to pull Indonesia away from moderate Islam and toward the austere Wahhabi form that is state religion in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis' campaign has been patient, multi-faceted, and lavishly financed. It mirrors others they have waged in Muslim countries across Asia and Africa.

Successive American presidents have assured us that Saudi Arabia is our friend and wishes us well. Yet we know that Osama bin Laden and most of his 9/11 hijackers were Saudis, and that, as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote in a diplomatic cable eight years ago, "Donors in Saudi Arabia constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide."

Recent events in Indonesia shine a light on a Saudi project that is even more pernicious than financing terrorists. Saudi Arabia has used its wealth, much of which comes from the United States, to turn entire nations into hotbeds of radical Islam. By refusing to protest or even officially acknowledge this far-reaching project, we finance our own assassins—and global terror.

The center of Saudi Arabia's campaign to convert Indonesians to Wahhabi Islam is a

tuition-free university in Jakarta known by the acronym LIPIA. All instruction is in Arabic, given mainly by preachers from Saudi Arabia and nearby countries. Genders are kept apart; strict dress codes are enforced; and music, television, and "loud laughter" are forbidden. Students learn an ultra-conservative form of Islam that favors hand amputation for thieves, stoning for adulterers, and death for gays and blasphemers.

Many of the students come from the more than 100 boarding schools Saudi Arabia supports in Indonesia, or have attended one of the 150 mosques that Saudis have built there. The most promising are given scholarships to study in Saudi Arabia, from which they return fully prepared to wreak social, political, and religious havoc in their homeland. Some promote terror groups like Hamas Indonesia and the Islamic Defenders Front, which did not exist before the Saudis arrived.

Eager to press his advantage, King Salman of Saudi Arabia made a nine-day trip to Indonesia in March, accompanied by an entourage of 1,500. The Saudis agreed to allow more than 200,000 Indonesians to make the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca each year—more than come from any other country—and sought permission to open new branches of their LIPIA university. Some Indonesians are pushing back against the Saudi assault on their traditional values, but it is difficult to deny permission for new religious schools when the state is not able to provide decent secular alternatives. In Indonesia, as in other countries where the Saudis are actively promoting Wahhabism—including Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bosnia—the weakness and corruption of central governments create pools of rootless unemployed who are easily seduced by the promises of free food and a place in God's army.

The surging fundamentalism that is transforming Indonesia teaches several lessons. First is one that we should already have learned, about the nature of the Saudi government. It is an absolute monarchy supported by one of the world's most reactionary religious sects. It gives clerics large sums to promote their anti-Western, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic brand of religious militancy abroad. In exchange, the clerics refrain from criticizing the Saudi monarchy or its thousands of high-living princes. Saudis with close ties to the ruling family give crucial support to groups like Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and ISIS. This fact should be at the front of our minds whenever we consider our policy toward the Middle East—including when we decide whether to side with the Saudis in their new dispute with neighboring Qatar.

Saudi Arabia's success in reshaping Indonesia shows the importance of the global battle over ideas. Many in Washington consider spending for cultural and other "soft power" projects to be wasteful. The Saudis feel differently. They pour money and resources into promoting their world view. We should do the same.

The third lesson that today's Indonesia teaches is about the vulnerability of democracy. In 1998 Indonesia's repressive military dictatorship gave way to a new system, based on free elections, that promised civil and political rights for all. Radical preachers who would previously have been imprisoned for whipping up religious hatred found themselves free to spread their poison. Democracy enables them to forge giant mobs that demand death for apostates. Their political parties campaign in democratic elections for the right to come to power and crush democracy. This is a sobering reality for those who believe that one political system is best for all countries under all circumstances.

The Saudi campaign to radicalize global Islam also shows that earth-shaking events often happen slowly and quietly. The press, focused intently on reporting today's news, often misses deeper and more important stories. Historians of journalism sometimes point to the northward "great migration" of African-Americans after World War II as an epochal story that few journalists noticed because it was a slow process rather than one-day news event.

The same is true of Saudi Arabia's long campaign to pull the world's 1.8 billion Muslims back to the 7th century. We barely notice it, but every day, from Mumbai to Manchester, we feel its effects.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, this article by Mr. Kinzer used the example—this is just one example—of Indonesia to demonstrate the incredibly negative impact Saudi financing has had in many places around the world.

I will quote from his article:

Saudi Arabia has been working for decades to pull Indonesia away from moderate Islam and toward the austere Wahhabi form that is state religion in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis' campaign has been patient, multi-faceted, and lavishly financed. It mirrors others they have waged in Muslim countries across Asia and Africa.

Successive American presidents have assured us that Saudi Arabia is our friend and wishes us well. Yet we know that Osama bin Laden and most of his 9/11 hijackers were Saudis, and that, as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote in a diplomatic cable eight years ago, "Donors in Saudi Arabia constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide."

Recent events in Indonesia shine a light on a Saudi project that is even more pernicious than financing terrorists. Saudi Arabia has used its wealth, much of which comes from the United States, to turn entire nations into hotbeds of radical Islam. By refusing to protest or even officially acknowledge this far-reaching project, we finance our own assassins—and global terror.

That is the end of a quote from that excellent article from the *Boston Globe*.

We all understand that there are times when we must work with problematic governments in order to advance our security goals, but for far too long, we have been giving a pass to a government in Saudi Arabia that supports ideas and policies that are fundamentally at odds with American values and that have led to extremely negative consequences for American security.

I think the time has come for the Congress to take a very hard look at this relationship and assess whether it is actually serving the interests and values of the American people.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I take the floor to strenuously argue against

the proposition being pushed by Senators PAUL, MURPHY, and others to deny arms sales of about \$500 million to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The package they are trying to exclude from the \$110 billion arms deal is precision-guided munitions that would be used by the F-15s, a package of Joint Direct Attack Munitions, Paveway laser-guided bombs for Saudi Tornado and Typhoon aircraft. The bottom line is, the package we are talking about are precision weapons the Saudi Air Force and military could use in operations against Iran's proxy in Yemen and other threats that continue to plague us.

The flaws of the Saudi Government are real. They are known to me. My friends on the other side, particularly Senator PAUL, constantly put Saudi Arabia and Iran on the same footing. I think that is a very unwise analysis.

To suggest that Saudi Arabia is as bad as Iran is just missing the point, big time. The Iranian bureaucracy is the most destabilizing force in the Mideast. They have aggressively pursued military action through proxies and have been directly involved in military actions in Syria. Iran's efforts to dominate Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and now Yemen have to be pushed back.

Here is what Secretary Mattis said about this proposal when I asked him the question: How would Iran view passage of this proposal limiting precision-guided weapons to the Saudis by Congress? He stated: "I believe Iran would be appreciative of us not selling these weapons to Saudi Arabia."

That is pretty direct. Iran would be really happy.

On September 21, 2016, 71 U.S. Senators supported a tank sale to Saudi Arabia. The vote was 71 to 27. In other words, 71 U.S. Senators rejected RAND PAUL's proposal to stop the sale of tanks. I would argue that a tank is not nearly as much of a precision weapon as the weapons we are talking about here to be given to the Saudi Air Force. If we are worried about collateral damage in Yemen, I understand the concern. Precision weapons would help that cause, not hurt it.

We have to understand whom we are dealing with in Yemen. We are dealing with Iran. Saudi Arabia has a border with Yemen. The Iranians are backing a force called the Houthis to bring down a pro-Western government in Yemen. From a Saudi perspective, everywhere you look you see Iran encroaching throughout the Mideast.

The bureaucracy in Iran is the biggest threat to the world order, and that is saying a lot, given the way the world is. I say that with confidence because what Iran is doing is trying to destabilize the Mideast in an unprecedented fashion. Our Arab allies are tired of it, and now is the time to stand with them—with their imperfections—against Iran and their hostilities.

This \$500 million chunk of the \$110 billion weapons sale is absolutely essential to the Saudi Air Force to get

these weapons, not only to minimize casualties but to win the fight against the aggressive nature of Iran in Yemen and other places.

I don't know where we are going with Iran, but the President has said the current nuclear deal is absolutely a terrible deal. He is right. This deal locks in a march toward a nuclear weapon by the Iranians if they don't cheat. They don't have to cheat. In 10 or 15 years, the agreement allows them to enrich and reprocess without limitation, so this deal has to be replaced.

I hope we don't go to war with anyone, but if we go to war, I want allies that are capable to help us in the fight. We complain about our Arab allies not doing enough. When they want to do more, we say no to them. Guess what. No wonder people believe America is an unreliable partner. We say one thing and do another.

To my Democratic colleagues: You were OK with voting to help President Obama increase the capability of the Saudi Army at a time when it was in our national security interest. What has changed between September 21 and today? What geopolitical situation has changed that all of a sudden Iran is no longer the threat they were in September of last year and Saudi Arabia is less reliable? Nothing, other than the election of Donald Trump. I have been a critic of Donald Trump—President Trump—when I thought it was necessary for the good of the country, but all I can say is, this wholesale defection by Democrats really is disturbing. It is undermining, I think, our national security interests when it comes to containing Iran. It is sending the worst possible signal we could be sending to our Arab allies at a time when we need them the most. I don't question people's motives; I question their judgment.

Here is my problem. I had no problem helping President Obama because I believe Saudi is the bulwark against Iranian expansion. Our allies in Saudi Arabia are imperfect, but they do share intelligence with us, they are in the fight, and we need to help them because it is in our interest to help them. You had absolutely no problem helping them when it was President Obama's idea. Everything Trump you seem to be against. That is absolutely disappointing, and quite frankly despicable.

To my Republican colleagues: RAND PAUL has been consistent. I respect his consistency. I just completely disagree with him. If you think containing Iran and keeping them from toppling Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon is not in our national interest, you are making a huge mistake. The last thing we want is the Iranian Ayatollah to march through the Mideast and start spreading his form of radical Shi'ism in the backyards of all of our Arab allies.

So I cannot urge this body more to reject this ill-conceived idea. It is \$500 million out of a \$110 billion package. It is the kind of weapons that will matter

on the battlefield. It will lessen civilian casualties, which is a noble goal, and will also give capabilities to the Saudis to more effectively contain Iran that is marching through Yemen, through their proxies, the Houthis.

General Mattis—Secretary Mattis has it right. Iran would be appreciative of our not selling those weapons to Saudi Arabia.

We are going to sanction Iran this week, I hope, for what they have done outside of the nuclear agreement. Since the nuclear agreement was passed, they have humiliated our sailors. They captured them on the high seas and humiliated them. I don't remember Saudi Arabia doing that. They are test-firing missiles in the violation of a U.N. resolution that could destroy Israel and one day reach us and our allies throughout the Mideast and Europe. They are spreading their form of radical Shi'ism all through the world, all through the Mideast. The money they received from the Iranian nuclear deal is not going to build roads, bridges, and hospitals, it is increasing the lethality of the IRG and other Iranian combatant units.

What we are trying to do and what President Trump is trying to do is give our allies the ability to contain the threat which is in our interest. Sanctioning Iran and denying Saudi Arabia the weapons they need to defend themselves and others against Iran is pretty inconsistent.

There is a military necessity for these weapons. It will change the equation on the battlefield. It is in our interest that Iran lose this effort to take over Yemen and destabilize the Mideast at large. You have to remember that these are the same people—the Iranians—who built lethal IEDs and injected them into Iraq—IEDs that killed many, many American soldiers. This is the same regime that took over our Embassy years ago, humiliated our sailors, and chants "death to America and Israel" on a regular basis. Yet here we are, sitting as a legislative body, contemplating our not helping an ally who is willing to fight the threat that is posed by Iran in the Mideast. All I can say is that on September 21, 2016, almost every Democrat saw this as a good move to help Saudi Arabia.

Now almost all of you are voting against an arms package that is more necessary today than it was in 2016. The only change is that we have a new President whom you hate.

I was not a big fan of President Obama's, but when I thought it was right, I stood with him. President Trump is right to increase the capability of the Saudi military to deal with the Iranian aggression. There is no bigger threat to the Middle East and America, I believe, than this Iranian regime in the hands of an ayatollah who is really a religious Nazi.

So I hope you will vote for what is best for America, which is to empower our allies to contain threats that we commonly enjoy. We enjoy the experience of being in the crosshairs of the

Ayatollah. They want to destroy the royal family in Saudi Arabia. They want to destroy Israel, and they want to destroy us. So the idea that we are not going to help an ally that is willing to fight is just inconceivable, and the idea that we are going to vote no for an arms package because Trump is President—and all of you over there voted yes before—is disappointing.

To my Republican colleagues, if you really think Iran is a threat, do not vote with Senator PAUL because you are sending the wrong signal.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, while my friend's remarks on the motives of Democrats are fresh in people's minds, let me address this directly. There is a new President today, but there is a different policy, and that is what this resolution is about. Let me be very clear about what we are talking about today.

Senator GRAHAM would have you believe that we are about to vote on the entirety of the \$110 billion in arms sales that was proposed—that was unveiled—by President Trump during his visit to Saudi Arabia. That is not the case. We are voting today on \$500 million of that \$110 billion sale. You can still be friends with Saudi Arabia and sell it \$109.5 billion worth of arms rather than \$110 billion worth of arms. The specific set of arms that we are talking about—precision-guided munitions that are going to be used to perpetuate the Saudi bombing campaign in Yemen—was the specific set of weapons that the Obama administration refused to transfer to the Saudis at the end of 2016. We did not take a vote on this in 2016. We took a vote on a different arms sale.

It is not simply that there is a new President and that Democrats are objecting to the arms sale that President Trump is moving forward with. It is that we have a new policy. This specific set of munitions that President Trump is asking us to consent to is one that President Obama would not sell. The policy is different, not just the personnel. Let's talk about why the policy is different.

What is happening today in Yemen is a humanitarian catastrophe of epic proportions. There are four famines that exist in the world today. One of them is in Yemen, and only one of those four is caused, in part, by the United States. The United States supports the Saudi-led bombing campaign that has had the effect of causing a humanitarian nightmare to play out in that country such that 8 million people right now in Yemen are in starvation or are on the brink of starvation. Last week, we received word that 100,000 people in Yemen now have cholera. Cholera? All of this is directly a result of the civil war.

The reason that the Obama administration decided not to transfer the precision-guided munitions to the Saudis is that the Saudis were using the weap-

ons we were giving them in order to deliberately target humanitarian infrastructure and civilian infrastructure inside Yemen. The Saudis have made it pretty clear that time is on their side, that they can wait out the Yemeni population and drive it to the negotiating table. They suggest that this humanitarian catastrophe, ultimately, accrues to their benefit because it eventually will push the Houthis into supporting a better deal than they would have otherwise for the Saudis.

Let me give you some direct evidence of how this bombing campaign is leading to the humanitarian crisis.

This cholera outbreak, which has been covered in the news, began, in part, because the Saudi airstrikes were targeting water treatment facilities inside Sanaa. This is independent reporting from relief agencies that operate on the ground inside Yemen that tell us that the Saudi bombing campaign that has targeted civilian infrastructure—in this case, water treatment facilities—has led to the cholera outbreak.

It continues. The bombing campaign that is leading to this catastrophe continues. The reason the Obama administration would not sell them this specific set of arms is that it did not have confidence that the arms would be used to hit purely military targets.

What we are asking for is to hold off on selling these precision-guided munitions until we get some clear promise—some clear assurance—from the Saudis that they are going to use these munitions only for military purposes and that they are going to start taking steps—real steps, tangible steps—to address the humanitarian crisis.

Senator YOUNG has been very articulate on the things that the Saudis are doing to stop—to halt—to slow the flow of relief supplies into Yemen today. There are some proactive things the Saudis could do, which they are not, that could save millions of lives inside Yemen today.

More broadly, I think this is an important moment for U.S. policy in the Middle East. The Saudis are our friends. They are an important, stabilizing presence in the Middle East. They have helped to broker a kind of detente between Sunni nations and Israel, our sacred ally. They cooperate with us on counterterrorism measures. They share intelligence with us. Clearly, we have an important economic relationship, but they are an imperfect partner.

This body should have a debate as to whether it is in the national security interests of the United States to get drawn more deeply into the set of proxy wars that is playing out in the region between the Sunnis and the Shia. That proxy battle plays out in Yemen; it plays out in Syria; and it plays out in other ways in places like Lebanon. Just because you have a friend does not mean that you have to back every single one of your friend's fights. If my friend asks me to hand him a rock to throw at the neighbor-

hood kids, I am not going to do it, but if he wants me to help him stand up to the neighborhood bully, then maybe I will be there for him. Even with your friends you decide what fights you join them in and what fights you don't.

In Yemen, it is not just I who is making the argument that the civil war is accruing to the detriment of U.S. national security interests; it is a broad swath of foreign policy experts and Middle East experts in this city and across this country and across the globe. Why? It is that this civil war is radicalizing the Yemeni people against the United States. They do not perceive this bombing campaign that is killing thousands of civilians as a Saudi bombing campaign. They perceive it as a U.S.-Saudi bombing campaign.

Just get your intelligence briefing, and look at the difference in the amount of space that AQAP controls today versus what it controlled before the civil war began. AQAP, which is the arm of al-Qaida that has the most capability to hit the United States, has grown exponentially in terms of the territory it controls. ISIS has grown as well. These extremist groups take advantage of the civil war, and if our priority in the region is really about defeating these organizations, then this civil war is not helping in that effort. Civilians are dying; extremist groups are growing; and the Yemeni population is being radicalized against us.

To exacerbate matters, the Trump administration has walked away from the political process. Secretary Kerry was actively involved in trying to bring the Houthis and the Saudi-backed government together. He got close to an agreement, but it fell apart. This administration has not restarted that process. For those who want to throw more arms into this contest, I think it is hard to believe that, ultimately, it will lead to any cease-fire or any peaceful transition to a new government if the United States is totally absent from the negotiating table as we are today.

This is not about objecting to the entirety of the sale, and this is not about delivering a broader message to the Saudis. This is about saying that this specific conflict in Yemen is not going well and is hurting the United States. Until we get some real assurances from the Saudis that they are going to pay attention to the "no strike" list, until we get some commitments from the Saudis that they are going to let relief supplies flow into Yemen to address the famine and address the cholera outbreak, then let's press pause on this small slice of this arms sale.

I am proud to join with Senator PAUL and others, and I hope that my colleagues will see fit to support it when we vote in about an hour and a half.

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. SCHUMER. 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. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before we recess for the caucus lunches, I wish to comment on the upcoming vote on a resolution of disapproval regarding a portion of President Trump's recent arms sales to Saudi Arabia. I have announced that I am in favor of the resolution of disapproval for several reasons.

First, the human rights and humanitarian concerns have been well documented with respect to Yemen. Yemen's story in the Middle East is a tragic one. Yemen's previous President ruled the country for decades with an iron fist and fleeced the country of its resources for his personal gain. He also allowed terrorist groups to enjoy safe haven in Yemen in the days after 9/11.

Today, Yemen remains a country in dire straits. It is on the verge of a famine, and there have been over 100,000 cases of cholera.

To make matters worse, the current conflict in Yemen, which includes the Saudi military, has worsened the humanitarian situation. Selling the kingdom precision weapons in this deal could further exacerbate the crisis.

Second, and of equal concern to me, is an area that hasn't been talked about much in this debate; that is, that the Saudi Government continues to aid and abet terrorism via its support and funding of schools that spread extremist Wahhabi propaganda. Saudi Arabia's support for these Wahhabi madrassas goes back decades. It is responsible for much of the radicalization of Muslim youth in the Middle East and North Africa.

In the past several months, we have witnessed lone-wolf attacks in London and in Tehran and elsewhere around the globe. Though the nature of terrorism has changed, many of the sources are the same. The propagation of Wahhabism, an extreme ideology, continues to fuel radicalism and terrorism around the globe. So if we want to get serious about cracking down on terrorism, the United States should focus—one of the focuses should be—on countering the spread of Wahhabism.

The White House has not clearly articulated how the United States will put pressure on Saudi Arabia to end their support of Wahhabi schools, even as it claims that President Trump's recent visit to Riyadh was focused on curtailing terrorism. Furthermore, the administration has not sufficiently assured Congress that these weapons will not fall into the wrong hands.

Look at Pakistan. It has become a radical place—it wasn't 15 years ago—in good part because of Saudi funding—Saudi individuals who are a good part of the government, some who are friends with the government—of these madrassas, which taught radicalism to the Pakistani people.

Look at Indonesia, one of the largest countries in the world. It had usually

practiced a form of Islam that was mild and tolerant. The Wahhabi schools are now flourishing in Indonesia, and it is becoming a radical place of danger to us.

We have to send a message to Saudi Arabia.

They do some good things. I support their putting pressure, for instance, on the Palestinian Authority to finally make peace with Israel. But they do a lot of bad things. It seems there has almost been a rotten deal between the Saudi monarchy and the Wahhabi clerics to work together. It has to end.

My vote for this resolution of disapproval hopefully can send a message to the Saudis that their behavior in regard to Wahhabism must change. It is hurting the world and eventually will hurt them.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:33 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. STRANGE).

MOTION TO DISCHARGE—S.J. RES. 42—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 10 minutes of debate remaining on the motion to discharge S.J. Res. 42, equally divided between Senator PAUL or his designee and the opponents of the motion.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak in opposition to the resolution before us.

It has obviously been tried before, and I think there is no doubt that if it were to pass, this could pose a very dangerous threat to our relationship with Saudi Arabia at a time when the Iranians have now achieved a peninsula all the way across from Tehran all the way to Baghdad, and there is no doubt that the Iranians have continued their aggressive behavior.

If we vote down this arms sale to Saudi Arabia, it would have a devastating effect on our standing in the Middle East and a long-term impact on our ability to counter what is clearly Iranian aggressive behavior. So I strongly urge my colleagues to vote against this resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I wish to join with Senator MCCAIN very quickly.

At 71 to 27, on September 21 of last year, we voted to approve tank sales to Saudi Arabia because they need more weapons and equipment to counter the Iranian aggression in Yemen and other places.

Most of the people who are now going to vote against precision-guided weap-

ons that will reduce civilian casualties voted for tank sales. This \$500 million carved out of this package gives Saudi Arabia a qualitative edge on the battlefield against Iranian proxies who could care less about civilian casualties. It is the most upside-down thinking I have ever seen, and many of you over there actually approved this because it was worked on before President Trump became President. So it is really disheartening to see you support President Obama's tank sales but that you are not going to support President Trump's selling weapons, which gives us an advantage over Iran in Saudi Arabia and actually reduces civilian casualties.

Secretary Mattis said it the best: Iran would appreciate killing this deal and taking these weapons off the table. I urge everybody in here, if you are serious about standing up to Iran, stand with Saudi Arabia, as imperfect as they are.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, the question is, Should we sell arms to Saudi Arabia—a country that many suspect was involved in 9/11; a country that many suspect gave weapons to ISIS, the people we are fighting in the Middle East; a country that imprisons the victims of rape because it is apparently or presumably the fault of the woman who is raped in Saudi Arabia?

One woman, the girl of Qatif, was given a sentence of 70 lashes and 6 months in jail. They increased her penalty to 200 lashes, and finally, only when we protested, was it reversed.

They sentenced a poet to 1,000 lashes. Sometimes you don't survive 1,000 lashes. So they gave him 100 at a time. He is going to be imprisoned for 10 years.

They are not the kind of persons we should be sending your weapons to. These weapons were funded and supported by the American taxpayer, and we should not be willy-nilly giving them to people who imprison their people for protesting.

Currently, a young man, 17 years old, named Ali al-Nimr is on death row. But it is not enough just to kill him for protesting for free speech and free press. They will behead him and crucify him.

This barbaric nation should not be getting our weapons. We should not sell them weapons.

Currently, there is a blockade of Yemen, and 17 million people risk starvation. We should not be supporting this effort.

There is probably no greater purveyor of hatred for Christianity and Judaism than Saudi Arabia. We should not be giving them weapons. They have madrassas across the world teaching hatred of us, preaching hatred of the West, hatred of Christianity, hatred of Judaism, and these people want to give them weapons. I don't get it. It makes no sense.

Some will argue that it is a jobs program. Well, isn't that swell. We are

going to give money to people who behead you and crucify you to create jobs. That should never be the way we make a decision about arms sales in our country.

A famous Republican and general, General Dwight Eisenhower, said he worried that someday we would make decisions not based on our defense but based on the military industrial complex.

I am embarrassed that people are out here talking about making us some money and making a buck, while 17 million people live on a starvation diet and are threatened with famine. I am embarrassed that people would bring up trying to feather the nest of corporations in order to sell these weapons. This should be made, pure and simple, on our national defense.

Saudi Arabia is not a reliable ally. Saudi Arabia should not get these weapons. For every supposed good thing they do, they do five things that are bad for America. They are the biggest purveyor of hatred of Christianity and Judaism.

I request a "no" vote, and I reserve the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PORTMAN). The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I respect my friend from Kentucky. We work together on the Foreign Relations Committee. I could not disagree more on this issue, and I will give a brief outline.

The Houthis are an Iran-backed entity that overthrew a Western-backed government in Yemen. Last year on the floor, with a vote of 71 votes, this body voted to support the selling of tanks to Saudi Arabia.

Foreign policy partisanship generally stops at the shores. I know Senator PAUL has been very consistent on this, but I am afraid this vote is somewhat about some Members wanting to get a piece of President Trump's hide on an issue that is far more important than something like that. I am fearful that this is what is happening today on the floor.

A lot of people don't realize that Saudi Arabia already has the bombs. What we would be selling to them is the precision-guided weaponry systems that allow these bombs to be smart bombs and not dumb bombs.

Most people have been concerned about Saudi Arabia when they have been involved in pushing back the Houthis, who, by the way, are firing weapons into their country from the southern border. It would be no different than if Mexico were doing that to ours. I know that is not going to happen. But, obviously, we would be firing back. So what is happening here is that they bought the bombs from Italy, and what they want to buy from us is these precision systems that allow them to not kill civilians. It is to protect civilians.

Think about this. Here in the Senate we want to protect civilians in Saudi

Arabia, and in our wisdom we are looking at blocking the sale of the very mechanisms that would allow that to happen—in some cases, I am afraid, just to make a point against the Trump administration.

Actually, their policies here have been very sound. The meeting they had in Saudi Arabia was very beneficial. Saudi Arabia has flaws, but they have been an ally. This would show us as stepping away from an ally in a way that is cutting our nose off to spite our face by not allowing them to have the precision mechanisms to keep them from killing civilians.

We have taken Senators down in the SCIF. There is absolutely no evidence that Saudi Arabia tried to kill civilians—none. As a matter of fact, there is evidence to the contrary. So, please, let's be rational. I know there are disagreements over some foreign policy issues. This should not be one of them. I urge defeat of this proposal.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, Saudi Arabia bombed a funeral procession. There was no mistake here. There was no cloud cover. There was no growth or coppice of trees and they accidentally bombed a funeral procession. They bombed them and killed 125 civilians in a funeral. They wounded 500. This was no mistake. This was no error. This was them, pointedly dropping bombs on civilians.

They put protestors in jail. They have a 17-year-old—he is now 20—who has been in jail for 3 years. He will be beheaded and then crucified. We should not be giving these people weapons. They supported ISIS. They are on the wrong side of the war. They are the greatest purveyor of hatred for Christianity and Judaism. They do not deserve your weapons. They are going to give your weapons. They belong to the American people. They are going to give them to people who behead and crucify protestors.

You can't take a Bible into Saudi Arabia. You can't visit their major cities.

We can't make them be like us, but we don't have to encourage their behavior by giving them weapons that may well fall into the hands of people who are our enemies.

I urge a "no" vote. I think we should not be selling arms to Saudi Arabia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The question is on agreeing to the motion to discharge.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 47, nays 53, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 143 Leg.]

YEAS—47

Baldwin	Harris	Paul
Bennet	Hassan	Peters
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Reed
Booker	Heitkamp	Sanders
Brown	Heller	Schatz
Cantwell	Hirono	Schumer
Cardin	Kaine	Shaheen
Carper	King	Stabenow
Casey	Klobuchar	Tester
Coons	Leahy	Udall
Cortez Masto	Lee	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Markey	Warren
Durbin	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wyden
Franken	Murphy	Young
Gillibrand	Murray	

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Alexander	Fischer	Nelson
Barrasso	Flake	Perdue
Blunt	Gardner	Portman
Boozman	Graham	Risch
Burr	Grassley	Roberts
Capito	Hatch	Rounds
Cassidy	Hoeven	Rubio
Cochran	Inhofe	Sasse
Collins	Isakson	Scott
Corker	Johnson	Shelby
Cornyn	Kennedy	Strange
Cotton	Lankford	Sullivan
Crapo	Manchin	Sullivan
Cruz	McCain	Thune
Daines	McCaskill	Tillis
Donnelly	McConnell	Toomey
Enzi	Moran	Warner
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the McConnell second-degree amendment No. 233 be withdrawn; that the pending cloture motion with respect to amendment No. 232 be withdrawn; that the amendment be modified with the technical changes at the desk; and that at 2 p.m., Wednesday, June 14, the Senate vote on adoption of the McConnell for Crapo amendment No. 232, as modified, with no intervening action or debate and no second-degree amendments in order to amendment No. 232 prior to the vote; finally, that following leader remarks on Wednesday, June 14, the time until 2 p.m. be equally divided in the usual form.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I will not object, but I reserve the right to object.

First, I want to thank the majority leader, as well as Senators CORKER, CARDIN, CRAPO, and BROWN. This is another example of how we can work together on issues we agree on. I am very proud of this bill. I think it will do a lot of good in both directions—in the Iran direction and particularly in the Russia direction. The lack of trust of Mr. Putin on both sides of the aisle here is paramount. Now this says that these sanctions will stay in place unless Congress disapproves them and adds some new sanctions—both good things. I hope the House will pass the bill without change and send it to the President's desk.

With that, I withdraw any objection and again thank the majority leader for the cooperation we have had.

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

The amendment (No. 232), as modified, is as follows:

On page 33, line 7, strike “subsection (a)” and insert “subsection (b)”.

On page 33, line 15, strike “subsection (a)” and insert “subsection (b)”.

On page 47, line 18, strike “The President” and insert “Except as provided in subsection (b), the President”.

On page 47, line 22, insert “(other than subsection (b))” after “this Act”.

At the end, add the following:

TITLE II—SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND COMBATING TERRORISM AND ILLICIT FINANCING

SEC. 201. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the “Countering Russian Influence in Europe and Eurasia Act of 2017”.

Subtitle A—Sanctions and Other Measures With Respect to the Russian Federation

SEC. 211. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) On March 6, 2014, President Barack Obama issued Executive Order 13660 (79 Fed. Reg. 13493; relating to blocking property of certain persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine), which authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to impose sanctions on those determined to be undermining democratic processes and institutions in Ukraine or threatening the peace, security, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine. President Obama subsequently issued Executive Order 13661 (79 Fed. Reg. 15535; relating to blocking property of additional persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine) and Executive Order 13662 (79 Fed. Reg. 16169; relating to blocking property of additional persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine) to expand sanctions on certain persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine.

(2) On December 18, 2014, the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 was enacted (Public Law 113-272; 22 U.S.C. 8921 et seq.), which includes provisions directing the President to impose sanctions on foreign persons that the President determines to be entities owned or controlled by the Government of the Russian Federation or nationals of the Russian Federation that manufacture, sell, transfer, or otherwise provide certain defense articles into Syria.

(3) On April 1, 2015, President Obama issued Executive Order 13694 (80 Fed. Reg. 18077; relating to blocking the property of certain persons engaging in significant malicious cyber-enabled activities), which authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Attorney General and the Secretary of State, to impose sanctions on persons determined to be engaged in malicious cyber-hacking.

(4) On July 26, 2016, President Obama approved a Presidential Policy Directive on United States Cyber Incident Coordination, which states, “certain cyber incidents that have significant impacts on an entity, our national security, or the broader economy require a unique approach to response efforts”.

(5) On December 29, 2016, President Obama issued an annex to Executive Order 13694, which authorized sanctions on the following entities and individuals:

(A) The Main Intelligence Directorate (also known as Glavnoe Razvedyvatel'noe

Upravlenie or the GRU) in Moscow, Russian Federation.

(B) The Federal Security Service (also known as Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti or the FSB) in Moscow, Russian Federation.

(C) The Special Technology Center (also known as STLC, Ltd. Special Technology Center St. Petersburg) in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation.

(D) Zorsecurity (also known as Esage Lab) in Moscow, Russian Federation.

(E) The autonomous noncommercial organization known as the Professional Association of Designers of Data Processing Systems (also known as ANO PO KSI) in Moscow, Russian Federation.

(F) Igor Valentinovich Korobov.

(G) Sergey Aleksandrovich Gizunov.

(H) Igor Olegovich Kostyukov.

(I) Vladimir Stepanovich Alexseyev.

(6) On January 6, 2017, an assessment of the United States intelligence community entitled, “Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections” stated, “Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the United States presidential election.” The assessment warns that “Moscow will apply lessons learned from its Putin-ordered campaign aimed at the U.S. Presidential election to future influence efforts worldwide, including against U.S. allies and their election processes”.

SEC. 212. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that the President—

(1) should engage to the fullest extent possible with partner governments with regard to closing loopholes, including the allowance of extended prepayment for the delivery of goods and commodities and other loopholes, in multilateral and unilateral restrictive measures against the Russian Federation, with the aim of maximizing alignment of those measures; and

(2) should increase efforts to vigorously enforce compliance with sanctions in place as of the date of the enactment of this Act with respect to the Russian Federation in response to the crisis in eastern Ukraine, cyber intrusions and attacks, and human rights violators in the Russian Federation.

PART I—CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW OF SANCTIONS IMPOSED WITH RESPECT TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

SEC. 215. SHORT TITLE.

The part may be cited as the “Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017”.

SEC. 216. CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW OF CERTAIN ACTIONS RELATING TO SANCTIONS IMPOSED WITH RESPECT TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

(a) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS OF PROPOSED ACTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, before taking any action described in paragraph (2), the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees and leadership a report that describes the proposed action and the reasons for that action.

(2) ACTIONS DESCRIBED.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—An action described in this paragraph is—

(i) an action to terminate the application of any sanctions described in subparagraph (B);

(ii) with respect to sanctions described in subparagraph (B) imposed by the President with respect to a person, an action to waive the application of those sanctions with respect to that person; or

(iii) a licensing action that significantly alters United States' foreign policy with regard to the Russian Federation.

(B) SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.—The sanctions described in this subparagraph are—

(i) sanctions provided for under—

(I) this title or any provision of law amended by this title, including the Executive Orders codified under section 222;

(II) the Support for the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8901 et seq.); or

(III) the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8921 et seq.); and

(ii) the prohibition on access to the properties of the Government of the Russian Federation located in Maryland and New York that the President ordered vacated on December 29, 2016.

(3) DESCRIPTION OF TYPE OF ACTION.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) with respect to an action described in paragraph (2) shall include a description of whether the action—

(A) is not intended to significantly alter United States' foreign policy with regard to the Russian Federation; or

(B) is intended to significantly alter United States' foreign policy with regard to the Russian Federation.

(4) INCLUSION OF ADDITIONAL MATTER.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) that relates to an action that is intended to achieve a reciprocal diplomatic outcome shall include a description of—

(i) the anticipated reciprocal diplomatic outcome;

(ii) the anticipated effect of the action on the national security interests of the United States; and

(iii) the policy objectives for which the sanctions affected by the action were initially imposed.

(B) REQUESTS FROM BANKING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEES.—The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate or the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives may request the submission to the Committee of the matter described in clauses (ii) and (iii) of subparagraph (A) with respect to a report submitted under paragraph (1) that relates to an action that is not intended to achieve a reciprocal diplomatic outcome.

(b) PERIOD FOR REVIEW BY CONGRESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—During the period of 30 calendar days beginning on the date on which the President submits a report under subsection (a)(1)—

(A) in the case of a report that relates to an action that is not intended to achieve a reciprocal diplomatic outcome, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives should, as appropriate, hold hearings and briefings and otherwise obtain information in order to fully review the report; and

(B) in the case of a report that relates to an action that is intended to achieve a reciprocal diplomatic outcome, the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives should, as appropriate, hold hearings and briefings and otherwise obtain information in order to fully review the report.

(2) EXCEPTION.—The period for congressional review under paragraph (1) of a report required to be submitted under subsection (a)(1) shall be 60 calendar days if the report is submitted on or after July 10 and on or before September 7 in any calendar year.

(3) LIMITATION ON ACTIONS DURING INITIAL CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW PERIOD.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, during the period for congressional review provided for under paragraph (1) of a report submitted under subsection (a)(1) proposing an action described in subsection (a)(2), including any

additional period for such review as applicable under the exception provided in paragraph (2), the President may not take that action unless a joint resolution of approval with respect to that action is enacted in accordance with subsection (c).

(4) **LIMITATION ON ACTIONS DURING PRESIDENTIAL CONSIDERATION OF A JOINT RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL.**—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, if a joint resolution of disapproval relating to a report submitted under subsection (a)(1) proposing an action described in subsection (a)(2) passes both Houses of Congress in accordance with subsection (c), the President may not take that action for a period of 12 calendar days after the date of passage of the joint resolution of disapproval.

(5) **LIMITATION ON ACTIONS DURING CONGRESSIONAL RECONSIDERATION OF A JOINT RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL.**—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, if a joint resolution of disapproval relating to a report submitted under subsection (a)(1) proposing an action described in subsection (a)(2) passes both Houses of Congress in accordance with subsection (c), and the President vetoes the joint resolution, the President may not take that action for a period of 10 calendar days after the date of the President's veto.

(6) **EFFECT OF ENACTMENT OF A JOINT RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL.**—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, if a joint resolution of disapproval relating to a report submitted under subsection (a)(1) proposing an action described in subsection (a)(2) is enacted in accordance with subsection (c), the President may not take that action.

(c) **JOINT RESOLUTIONS OF DISAPPROVAL OR APPROVAL DEFINED.**—In this subsection:

(1) **JOINT RESOLUTION OF APPROVAL.**—The term “joint resolution of approval” means only a joint resolution of either House of Congress—

(A) the title of which is as follows: “A joint resolution approving the President’s proposal to take an action relating to the application of certain sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation.”; and

(B) the sole matter after the resolving clause of which is the following: “Congress approves of the action relating to the application of sanctions imposed with respect to the Russian Federation proposed by the President in the report submitted to Congress under section 216(a)(1) of the Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017 on _____ relating to _____”, with the first blank space being filled with the appropriate date and the second blank space being filled with a short description of the proposed action.

(2) **JOINT RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL.**—The term “joint resolution of disapproval” means only a joint resolution of either House of Congress—

(A) the title of which is as follows: “A joint resolution disapproving the President’s proposal to take an action relating to the application of certain sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation.”; and

(B) the sole matter after the resolving clause of which is the following: “Congress disapproves of the action relating to the application of sanctions imposed with respect to the Russian Federation proposed by the President in the report submitted to Congress under section 216(a)(1) of the Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017 on _____ relating to _____”, with the first blank space being filled with the appropriate date and the second blank space being filled with a short description of the proposed action.

(3) **INTRODUCTION.**—During the period of 30 calendar days provided for under subsection (b)(1), including any additional period as applicable under the exception provided in sub-

section (b)(2), a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval may be introduced—

(A) in the House of Representatives, by the majority leader or the minority leader; and

(B) in the Senate, by the majority leader (or the majority leader’s designee) or the minority leader (or the minority leader’s designee).

(4) **FLOOR CONSIDERATION IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**—

(A) **REPORTING AND DISCHARGE.**—If a committee of the House of Representatives to which a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval has been referred has not reported the joint resolution within 10 calendar days after the date of referral, that committee shall be discharged from further consideration of the joint resolution.

(B) **PROCEEDING TO CONSIDERATION.**—Beginning on the third legislative day after each committee to which a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval has been referred reports the joint resolution to the House or has been discharged from further consideration of the joint resolution, it shall be in order to move to proceed to consider the joint resolution in the House. All points of order against the motion are waived. Such a motion shall not be in order after the House has disposed of a motion to proceed on the joint resolution. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the motion to its adoption without intervening motion. The motion shall not be debatable. A motion to reconsider the vote by which the motion is disposed of shall not be in order.

(C) **CONSIDERATION.**—The joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval shall be considered as read. All points of order against the joint resolution and against its consideration are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the joint resolution to final passage without intervening motion except 2 hours of debate equally divided and controlled by the sponsor of the joint resolution (or a designee) and an opponent. A motion to reconsider the vote on passage of the joint resolution shall not be in order.

(5) **CONSIDERATION IN THE SENATE.**—

(A) **COMMITTEE REFERRAL.**—A joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval introduced in the Senate shall be—

(i) referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs if the joint resolution relates to a report under section 216A3 that is described as an action that is not intended to significantly alter United States foreign policy with regard to the Russian Federation, and

(ii) referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations if the joint resolution relates to a report under section 216A3 that is described as an action that is intended to significantly alter United States foreign policy with respect to the Russian Federation.

(B) **REPORTING AND DISCHARGE.**—If the committee to which a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval was referred has not reported the joint resolution within 10 calendar days after the date of referral of the joint resolution, that committee shall be discharged from further consideration of the joint resolution and the joint resolution shall be placed on the appropriate calendar.

(C) **PROCEEDING TO CONSIDERATION.**—Notwithstanding Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, it is in order at any time after the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs or the Committee on Foreign Relations, as the case may be, reports a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval to the Senate or has been discharged from consideration of such a joint resolution (even though a pre-

vious motion to the same effect has been disagreed to) to move to proceed to the consideration of the joint resolution, and all points of order against the joint resolution (and against consideration of the joint resolution) are waived. The motion to proceed is not debatable. The motion is not subject to a motion to postpone. A motion to reconsider the vote by which the motion is agreed to or disagreed to shall not be in order.

(D) **RULINGS OF THE CHAIR ON PROCEDURE.**—Appeals from the decisions of the Chair relating to the application of the rules of the Senate, as the case may be, to the procedure relating to a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval shall be decided without debate.

(E) **CONSIDERATION OF VETO MESSAGES.**—Debate in the Senate of any veto message with respect to a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval, including all debatable motions and appeals in connection with the joint resolution, shall be limited to 10 hours, to be equally divided between, and controlled by, the majority leader and the minority leader or their designees.

(6) **RULES RELATING TO SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**—

(A) **COORDINATION WITH ACTION BY OTHER HOUSE.**—If, before the passage by one House of a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval of that House, that House receives an identical joint resolution from the other House, the following procedures shall apply:

(i) The joint resolution of the other House shall not be referred to a committee.

(ii) With respect to the joint resolution of the House receiving the joint resolution from the other House—

(I) the procedure in that House shall be the same as if no joint resolution had been received from the other House; but

(II) the vote on passage shall be on the joint resolution of the other House.

(B) **TREATMENT OF A JOINT RESOLUTION OF OTHER HOUSE.**—If one House fails to introduce a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval, a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval of the other House shall be entitled to expedited procedures in that House under this subsection.

(C) **TREATMENT OF HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION IN SENATE.**—If, following passage of a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval in the Senate, the Senate receives an identical joint resolution from the House of Representatives, that joint resolution shall be placed on the appropriate Senate calendar.

(D) **APPLICATION TO REVENUE MEASURES.**—The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply in the House of Representatives to a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval that is a revenue measure.

(7) **RULES OF HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND SENATE.**—This subsection is enacted by Congress—

(A) as an exercise of the rulemaking power of the Senate and the House of Representatives, respectively, and as such is deemed a part of the rules of each House, respectively, but applicable only with respect to the procedure to be followed in that House in the case of a joint resolution of approval or joint resolution of disapproval, and supersedes other rules only to the extent that it is inconsistent with such rules; and

(B) with full recognition of the constitutional right of either House to change the rules (so far as relating to the procedure of that House) at any time, in the same manner, and to the same extent as in the case of any other rule of that House.

(d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES AND LEADERSHIP DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees and leadership” means—

(1) the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the majority and minority leaders of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Financial Services, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the Speaker, the majority leader, and the minority leader of the House of Representatives.

PART II—SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

SEC. 221. DEFINITIONS.

In this part:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the Committee on Finance of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, and the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives.

(2) GOOD.—The term “good” has the meaning given that term in section 16 of the Export Administration Act of 1979 (50 U.S.C. 4618) (as continued in effect pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.)).

(3) INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.—The term “international financial institution” has the meaning given that term in section 1701(c) of the International Financial Institutions Act (22 U.S.C. 262r(c)).

(4) KNOWINGLY.—The term “knowingly”, with respect to conduct, a circumstance, or a result, means that a person has actual knowledge, or should have known, of the conduct, the circumstance, or the result.

(5) PERSON.—The term “person” means an individual or entity.

(6) UNITED STATES PERSON.—The term “United States person” means—

(A) a United States citizen or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence to the United States; or

(B) an entity organized under the laws of the United States or of any jurisdiction within the United States, including a foreign branch of such an entity.

SEC. 222. CODIFICATION OF SANCTIONS RELATING TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

(a) CODIFICATION.—United States sanctions provided for in Executive Order 13660 (79 Fed. Reg. 13493; relating to blocking property of certain persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine), Executive Order 13661 (79 Fed. Reg. 15535; relating to blocking property of additional persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine), Executive Order 13662 (79 Fed. Reg. 16169; relating to blocking property of additional persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine), Executive Order 13685 (79 Fed. Reg. 77357; relating to blocking property of certain persons and prohibiting certain transactions with respect to the Crimea region of Ukraine), Executive Order 13694 (80 Fed. Reg. 18077; relating to blocking the property of certain persons engaging in significant malicious cyber-enabled activities), and Executive Order 13757 (82 Fed. Reg. 1; relating to taking additional steps to address the national emergency with respect to significant malicious cyber-enabled activities), as in effect on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act, including with respect to all persons sanctioned under such Executive Orders, shall remain in effect except as provided in subsection (b).

(b) TERMINATION OF CERTAIN SANCTIONS.—Subject to section 216, the President may terminate the application of sanctions described in subsection (a) that are imposed on

a person in connection with activity conducted by the person if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees a notice that—

(1) the person is not engaging in the activity that was the basis for the sanctions or has taken significant verifiable steps toward stopping the activity; and

(2) the President has received reliable assurances that the person will not knowingly engage in activity subject to sanctions described in subsection (a) in the future.

(c) APPLICATION OF NEW CYBER SANCTIONS.—The President may waive the initial application under subsection (a) of sanctions with respect to a person under Executive Order 13694 or 13757 only if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

(1) a written determination that the waiver—

(A) is in the vital national security interests of the United States; or

(B) will further the enforcement of this title; and

(2) a certification that the Government of the Russian Federation has made significant efforts to reduce the number and intensity of cyber intrusions conducted by that Government.

(d) APPLICATION OF NEW UKRAINE-RELATED SANCTIONS.—The President may waive the initial application under subsection (a) of sanctions with respect to a person under Executive Order 13660, 13661, 13662, or 13685 only if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

(1) a written determination that the waiver—

(A) is in the vital national security interests of the United States; or

(B) will further the enforcement of this title; and

(2) a certification that the Government of the Russian Federation is taking steps to implement the Minsk Agreement to address the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, signed in Minsk, Belarus, on February 11, 2015, by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany, the Minsk Protocol, which was agreed to on September 5, 2014, and any successor agreements that are agreed to by the Government of Ukraine.

SEC. 223. MODIFICATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 13662.

(a) DETERMINATION THAT CERTAIN ENTITIES ARE SUBJECT TO SANCTIONS.—The Secretary of the Treasury may determine that a person meets one or more of the criteria in section 1(a) of Executive Order 13662 if that person is a state-owned entity operating in the railway, shipping, or metals and mining sector of the economy of the Russian Federation.

(b) MODIFICATION OF DIRECTIVE 1 WITH RESPECT TO THE FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTOR OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ECONOMY.—The Director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control shall modify Directive 1 (as amended), dated September 12, 2014, issued by the Office of Foreign Assets Control under Executive Order 13662, or any successor directive, to ensure that the directive prohibits the conduct by United States persons or persons within the United States of all transactions in, provision of financing for, and other dealings in new debt of longer than 14 days maturity or new equity of persons determined to be subject to the directive, their property, or their interests in property.

(c) MODIFICATION OF DIRECTIVE 2 WITH RESPECT TO THE ENERGY SECTOR OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ECONOMY.—The Director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control shall modify Directive 2 (as amended), dated September 12, 2014, issued by the Office of Foreign Assets Control under Executive Order 13662, or any successor directive, to ensure that the directive prohibits the conduct by United

States persons or persons within the United States of all transactions in, provision of financing for, and other dealings in new debt of longer than 30 days maturity of persons determined to be subject to the directive, their property, or their interests in property.

(d) MODIFICATION OF DIRECTIVE 4.—The Director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control shall modify Directive 4, dated September 12, 2014, issued by the Office of Foreign Assets Control under Executive Order 13662, or any successor directive, to ensure that the directive prohibits the provision, exportation, or reexportation, directly or indirectly, by United States persons or persons within the United States, of goods, services (except for financial services), or technology in support of exploration or production for deepwater, Arctic offshore, or shale projects—

(1) that have the potential to produce oil; (2) in which a Russian energy firm is involved; and

(3) that involve any person determined to be subject to the directive or the property or interests in property of such a person.

SEC. 224. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO ACTIVITIES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION UNDERMINING CYBERSECURITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—On and after the date that is 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall—

(1) impose the sanctions described in subsection (b) with respect to any person that the President determines—

(A) knowingly engages in significant activities undermining cybersecurity against any person, including a democratic institution, or government on behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation; or

(B) is owned or controlled by, or acts or purports to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, a person described in subparagraph (A);

(2) impose 5 or more of the sanctions described in section 235 with respect to any person that the President determines knowingly materially assists, sponsors, or provides financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services (except financial services) in support of, an activity described in paragraph (1)(A); and

(3) impose 3 or more of the sanctions described in section 4(c) of the of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8923(c)) with respect to any person that the President determines knowingly provides financial services in support of an activity described in paragraph (1)(A).

(b) SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.—The sanctions described in this subsection are the following:

(1) ASSET BLOCKING.—The exercise of all powers granted to the President by the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) to the extent necessary to block and prohibit all transactions in all property and interests in property of a person determined by the President to be subject to subsection (a)(1) if such property and interests in property are in the United States, come within the United States, or are or come within the possession or control of a United States person.

(2) EXCLUSION FROM THE UNITED STATES AND REVOCATION OF VISA OR OTHER DOCUMENTATION.—In the case of an alien determined by the President to be subject to subsection (a)(1), denial of a visa to, and exclusion from the United States of, the alien, and revocation in accordance with section 221(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1201(i)), of any visa or other documentation of the alien.

(c) APPLICATION OF NEW CYBER SANCTIONS.—The President may waive the initial application under subsection (a) of sanctions with respect to a person only if the President

submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

(1) a written determination that the waiver—

(A) is in the vital national security interests of the United States; or

(B) will further the enforcement of this title; and

(2) a certification that the Government of the Russian Federation has made significant efforts to reduce the number and intensity of cyber intrusions conducted by that Government.

(d) **SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES UNDERMINING CYBERSECURITY DEFINED.**—In this section, the term “significant activities undermining cybersecurity” includes—

(1) significant efforts—

(A) to deny access to or degrade, disrupt, or destroy an information and communications technology system or network; or

(B) to exfiltrate, degrade, corrupt, destroy, or release information from such a system or network without authorization for purposes of—

(i) conducting influence operations; or

(ii) causing a significant misappropriation of funds, economic resources, trade secrets, personal identifications, or financial information for commercial or competitive advantage or private financial gain;

(2) significant destructive malware attacks; and

(3) significant denial of service activities.

SEC. 225. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS RELATING TO SPECIAL RUSSIAN CRUDE OIL PROJECTS.

Section 4(b)(1) of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8923(b)(1)) is amended by striking “on and after the date that is 45 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President may impose” and inserting “on and after the date that is 30 days after the date of the enactment of the Countering Russian Influence in Europe and Eurasia Act of 2017, the President shall impose, unless the President determines that it is not in the national interest of the United States to do so.”.

SEC. 226. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO RUSSIAN AND OTHER FOREIGN FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS.

Section 5 of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8924) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by striking “may impose” and inserting “shall impose, unless the President determines that it is not in the national interest of the United States to do so.”; and

(B) by striking “on or after the date of the enactment of this Act” and inserting “on or after the date of the enactment of the Countering Russian Influence in Europe and Eurasia Act of 2017”; and

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) by striking “may impose” and inserting “shall impose, unless the President determines that it is not in the national interest of the United States to do so.”; and

(B) by striking “on or after the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act” and inserting “on or after the date that is 30 days after the date of the enactment of the Countering Russian Influence in Europe and Eurasia Act of 2017”.

SEC. 227. MANDATORY IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO SIGNIFICANT CORRUPTION IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

Section 9 of the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8908(a)) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking “is authorized and encouraged to” and inserting “shall”; and

(B) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by striking “President determines is” and inserting “President determines is, on or

after the date of the enactment of the Countering Russian Influence in Europe and Eurasia Act of 2017.”; and

(ii) by inserting “or elsewhere” after “in the Russian Federation”;

(2) by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (e);

(3) in subsection (c), by striking “The President” and inserting “except as provided in subsection (d), the President”; and

(4) by inserting after subsection (c) the following:

“(d) **APPLICATION OF NEW SANCTIONS.**—The President may waive the initial application of sanctions under subsection (b) with respect to a person only if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

“(1) a written determination that the waiver—

“(A) is in the vital national security interests of the United States; or

“(B) will further the enforcement of this Act; and

“(2) a certification that the Government of the Russian Federation is taking steps to implement the Minsk Agreement to address the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, signed in Minsk, Belarus, on February 11, 2015, by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany, the Minsk Protocol, which was agreed to on September 5, 2014, and any successor agreements that are agreed to by the Government of Ukraine.”.

SEC. 228. MANDATORY IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN TRANSACTIONS WITH FOREIGN SANCTIONS EVADERS AND SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSERS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Support for the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8901 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SEC. 10. MANDATORY IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN TRANSACTIONS WITH PERSONS THAT EVADE SANCTIONS IMPOSED WITH RESPECT TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

“(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The President shall impose the sanctions described in subsection (b) with respect to a foreign person if the President determines that the foreign person knowingly, on or after the date of the enactment of the Countering Russian Influence in Europe and Eurasia Act of 2017—

“(1) materially violates, attempts to violate, conspires to violate, or causes a violation of any license, order, regulation, or prohibition contained in or issued pursuant to any covered Executive order; or

“(2) facilitates significant deceptive or structured transactions for or on behalf of—

“(A) any person subject to sanctions imposed by the United States with respect to the Russian Federation; or

“(B) any child, spouse, parent, or sibling of an individual described in subparagraph (A).

“(b) **SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.**—The sanctions described in this subsection are the exercise of all powers granted to the President by the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) to the extent necessary to block and prohibit all transactions in all property and interests in property of a person determined by the President to be subject to subsection (a) if such property and interests in property are in the United States, come within the United States, or are or come within the possession or control of a United States person.

“(c) **IMPLEMENTATION; PENALTIES.**—

“(1) **IMPLEMENTATION.**—The President may exercise all authorities provided to the President under sections 203 and 205 of the International Emergency Economic Powers

Act (50 U.S.C. 1702 and 1704) to carry out subsection (b).

“(2) **PENALTIES.**—A person that violates, attempts to violate, conspires to violate, or causes a violation of subsection (b) or any regulation, license, or order issued to carry out subsection (b) shall be subject to the penalties set forth in subsections (b) and (c) of section 206 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1705) to the same extent as a person that commits an unlawful act described in subsection (a) of that section.

“(d) **APPLICATION OF NEW SANCTIONS.**—The President may waive the initial application of sanctions under subsection (b) with respect to a person only if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

“(1) a written determination that the waiver—

“(A) is in the vital national security interests of the United States; or

“(B) will further the enforcement of this Act;

“(2) in the case of sanctions imposed under this section in connection with a covered Executive order described in subparagraph (A), (B), (C), or (D) of subsection (f)(1), a certification that the Government of the Russian Federation is taking steps to implement the Minsk Agreement to address the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, signed in Minsk, Belarus, on February 11, 2015, by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany, the Minsk Protocol, which was agreed to on September 5, 2014, and any successor agreements that are agreed to by the Government of Ukraine; and

“(3) in the case of sanctions imposed under this section in connection with a covered Executive order described in subparagraphs (E) or (F) of subsection (f)(1), a certification that the Government of the Russian Federation has made significant efforts to reduce the number and intensity of cyber intrusions conducted by that Government.

“(e) **TERMINATION.**—Subject to section 216 of the Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017, the President may terminate the application of sanctions under subsection (b) with respect to a person if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

“(1) a notice of and justification for the termination; and

“(2) a notice that—

“(A) the person is not engaging in the activity that was the basis for the sanctions or has taken significant verifiable steps toward stopping the activity; and

“(B) the President has received reliable assurances that the person will not knowingly engage in activity subject to sanctions under subsection (a) in the future.

“(f) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

“(1) **COVERED EXECUTIVE ORDER.**—The term “covered Executive order” means any of the following:

“(A) Executive Order 13660 (79 Fed. Reg. 13493; relating to blocking property of certain persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine).

“(B) Executive Order 13661 (79 Fed. Reg. 15535; relating to blocking property of additional persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine).

“(C) Executive Order 13662 (79 Fed. Reg. 16169; relating to blocking property of additional persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine).

“(D) Executive Order 13685 (79 Fed. Reg. 77357; relating to blocking property of certain persons and prohibiting certain transactions with respect to the Crimea region of Ukraine).

“(E) Executive Order 13694 (80 Fed. Reg. 18077; relating to blocking the property of

certain persons engaging in significant malicious cyber-enabled activities).

“(F) Executive Order 13757 (82 Fed. Reg. 1; relating to taking additional steps to address the national emergency with respect to significant malicious cyber-enabled activities).

“(2) FOREIGN PERSON.—The term ‘foreign person’ has the meaning given such term in section 595.304 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of the enactment of the Countering Russian Influence in Europe and Eurasia Act of 2017).

“(3) STRUCTURED.—The term ‘structured’, with respect to a transaction, has the meaning given the term ‘structure’ in paragraph (xx) of section 1010.100 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations (or any corresponding similar regulation or ruling).

“SEC. 11. MANDATORY IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO TRANSACTIONS WITH PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall impose the sanctions described in subsection (b) with respect to a foreign person if the President determines that the foreign person, based on credible information, on or after the date of the enactment of the Countering Russian Influence in Europe and Eurasia Act of 2017—

“(1) is responsible for, complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, the commission of serious human rights abuses in any territory forcibly occupied or otherwise controlled by the Government of the Russian Federation;

“(2) materially assists, sponsors, or provides financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to, a foreign person described in paragraph (1); or

“(3) is owned or controlled by, or acts or purports to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, a foreign person described in paragraph (1).

“(b) SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.—

“(1) ASSET BLOCKING.—The exercise of all powers granted to the President by the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) to the extent necessary to block and prohibit all transactions in all property and interests in property of a person determined by the President to be subject to subsection (a) if such property and interests in property are in the United States, come within the United States, or are or come within the possession or control of a United States person.

“(2) EXCLUSION FROM THE UNITED STATES AND REVOCATION OF VISA OR OTHER DOCUMENTATION.—In the case of an alien determined by the President to be subject to subsection (a), denial of a visa to, and exclusion from the United States of, the alien, and revocation in accordance with section 221(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1201(i)), of any visa or other documentation of the alien.

“(c) APPLICATION OF NEW SANCTIONS.—The President may waive the initial application of sanctions under subsection (b) with respect to a person only if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

“(1) a written determination that the waiver—

“(A) is in the vital national security interests of the United States; or

“(B) will further the enforcement of this Act; and

“(2) a certification that the Government of the Russian Federation has made efforts to reduce serious human rights abuses in territory forcibly occupied or otherwise controlled by that Government.

“(d) IMPLEMENTATION; PENALTIES.—

“(1) IMPLEMENTATION.—The President may exercise all authorities provided to the President under sections 203 and 205 of the

International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1702 and 1704) to carry out subsection (b)(1).

“(2) PENALTIES.—A person that violates, attempts to violate, conspires to violate, or causes a violation of subsection (b)(1) or any regulation, license, or order issued to carry out subsection (b)(1) shall be subject to the penalties set forth in subsections (b) and (c) of section 206 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1705) to the same extent as a person that commits an unlawful act described in subsection (a) of that section.

“(e) TERMINATION.—Subject to section 216 of the Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017, the President may terminate the application of sanctions under subsection (b) with respect to a person if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

“(1) a notice of and justification for the termination; and

“(2) a notice—

“(A) that—

“(i) the person is not engaging in the activity that was the basis for the sanctions or has taken significant verifiable steps toward stopping the activity; and

“(ii) the President has received reliable assurances that the person will not knowingly engage in activity subject to sanctions under subsection (a) in the future; or

“(B) that the President determines that insufficient basis exists for the determination by the President under subsection (a) with respect to the person.”.

(b) DEFINITION OF APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—Section 2(2) of the Support for the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8901(2)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by inserting “the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs,” before “the Committee on Foreign Relations”; and

(2) in subparagraph (B), by inserting “the Committee on Financial Services” before “the Committee on Foreign Affairs”.

SEC. 229. NOTIFICATIONS TO CONGRESS UNDER UKRAINE FREEDOM SUPPORT ACT OF 2014.

(a) SANCTIONS RELATING TO DEFENSE AND ENERGY SECTORS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.—Section 4 of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8923) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (g) and (h) as subsections (h) and (i), respectively;

(2) by inserting after subsection (f) the following:

“(g) NOTIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS TO CONGRESS.—

“(1) IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS.—The President shall notify the appropriate congressional committees in writing not later than 15 days after imposing sanctions with respect to a foreign person under subsection (a) or (b).

“(2) TERMINATION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO RUSSIAN PRODUCERS, TRANSFERORS, OR BROKERS OF DEFENSE ARTICLES.—Subject to section 216 of the Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017, the President may terminate the imposition of sanctions under subsection (a)(2) with respect to a foreign person if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

“(A) a notice of and justification for the termination; and

“(B) a notice that—

“(i) the foreign person is not engaging in the activity that was the basis for the sanctions or has taken significant verifiable steps toward stopping the activity; and

“(ii) the President has received reliable assurances that the foreign person will not knowingly engage in activity subject to

sanctions under subsection (a)(2) in the future.”; and

(3) in subparagraph (B)(ii) of subsection (a)(3), by striking “subsection (h)” and inserting “subsection (i)”.

(b) SANCTIONS ON RUSSIAN AND OTHER FOREIGN FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS.—Section 5 of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8924) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (e) and (f) as subsections (f) and (g), respectively;

(2) by inserting after subsection (d) the following:

“(e) NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS ON IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS.—The President shall notify the appropriate congressional committees in writing not later than 15 days after imposing sanctions with respect to a foreign financial institution under subsection (a) or (b).”; and

(3) in subsection (g), as redesignated by paragraph (1), by striking “section 4(h)” and inserting “section 4(i)”.

SEC. 230. STANDARDS FOR TERMINATION OF CERTAIN SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

(a) SANCTIONS RELATING TO UNDERMINING THE PEACE, SECURITY, STABILITY, SOVEREIGNTY, OR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF UKRAINE.—Section 8 of the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8907) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (e); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (c) the following:

“(d) TERMINATION.—Subject to section 216 of the Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017, the President may terminate the application of sanctions under subsection (b) with respect to a person if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees a notice that—

“(1) the person is not engaging in the activity that was the basis for the sanctions or has taken significant verifiable steps toward stopping the activity; and

“(2) the President has received reliable assurances that the person will not knowingly engage in activity subject to sanctions under subsection (a) in the future.”.

(b) SANCTIONS RELATING TO CORRUPTION.—Section 9 of the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8908) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (e); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (c) the following:

“(d) TERMINATION.—Subject to section 216 of the Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017, the President may terminate the application of sanctions under subsection (b) with respect to a person if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees a notice that—

“(1) the person is not engaging in the activity that was the basis for the sanctions or has taken significant verifiable steps toward stopping the activity; and

“(2) the President has received reliable assurances that the person will not knowingly engage in activity subject to sanctions under subsection (a) in the future.”.

SEC. 231. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO PERSONS ENGAGING IN TRANSACTIONS WITH THE INTELLIGENCE OR DEFENSE SECTORS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—On and after the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall impose 5 or more of the sanctions described in section 235 with respect to a person the President determines knowingly, on or after such date of enactment, engages in a significant

transaction with a person that is part of, or operates for or on behalf of, the defense or intelligence sectors of the Government of the Russian Federation, including the Main Intelligence Agency of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation or the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation.

(b) APPLICATION OF NEW SANCTIONS.—The President may waive the initial application of sanctions under subsection (a) with respect to a person only if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

(1) a written determination that the waiver—

(A) is in the vital national security interests of the United States; or

(B) will further the enforcement of this title; and

(2) a certification that the Government of the Russian Federation has made significant efforts to reduce the number and intensity of cyber intrusions conducted by that Government.

SEC. 232. SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PIPELINES IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The President may impose 5 or more of the sanctions described in section 235 with respect to a person if the President determines that the person knowingly, on or after the date of the enactment of this Act, makes an investment described in subsection (b) or sells, leases, or provides to the Russian Federation, for the construction of Russian energy export pipelines, goods, services, technology, information, or support described in subsection (c)—

(1) any of which has a fair market value of \$1,000,000 or more; or

(2) that, during a 12-month period, have an aggregate fair market value of \$5,000,000 or more.

(b) INVESTMENT DESCRIBED.—An investment described in this subsection is an investment that directly and significantly contributes to the enhancement of the ability of the Russian Federation to construct energy export pipelines.

(c) GOODS, SERVICES, TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION, OR SUPPORT DESCRIBED.—Goods, services, technology, information, or support described in this subsection are goods, services, technology, information, or support that could directly and significantly facilitate the maintenance or expansion of the construction, modernization, or repair of energy pipelines by the Russian Federation.

SEC. 233. SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO INVESTMENT IN OR FACILITATION OF PRIVATIZATION OF STATE-OWNED ASSETS BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall impose 5 or more of the sanctions described in section 235 if the President determines that a person, with actual knowledge, on or after the date of the enactment of this Act, makes an investment of \$10,000,000 or more (or any combination of investments of not less than \$1,000,000 each, which in the aggregate equals or exceeds \$10,000,000 in any 12-month period), or facilitates such an investment, if the investment directly and significantly contributes to the ability of the Russian Federation to privatize state-owned assets in a manner that unjustly benefits—

(1) officials of the Government of the Russian Federation; or

(2) close associates or family members of those officials.

(b) APPLICATION OF NEW SANCTIONS.—The President may waive the initial application of sanctions under subsection (a) with respect to a person only if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

(1) a written determination that the waiver—

(A) is in the vital national security interests of the United States; or

(B) will further the enforcement of this title; and

(2) a certification that the Government of the Russian Federation is taking steps to implement the Minsk Agreement to address the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, signed in Minsk, Belarus, on February 11, 2015, by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany, the Minsk Protocol, which was agreed to on September 5, 2014, and any successor agreements that are agreed to by the Government of Ukraine.

SEC. 234. SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE TRANSFER OF ARMS AND RELATED MATERIEL TO SYRIA.

(a) IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The President shall impose on a foreign person the sanctions described in subsection (b) if the President determines that such foreign person has, on or after the date of the enactment of this Act, knowingly exported, transferred, or otherwise provided to Syria significant financial, material, or technological support that contributes materially to the ability of the Government of Syria to—

(A) acquire or develop chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons or related technologies;

(B) acquire or develop ballistic or cruise missile capabilities;

(C) acquire or develop destabilizing numbers and types of advanced conventional weapons;

(D) acquire significant defense articles, defense services, or defense information (as such terms are defined under the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2751 et seq.)); or

(E) acquire items designated by the President for purposes of the United States Munitions List under section 38(a)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2778(a)(1)).

(2) APPLICABILITY TO OTHER FOREIGN PERSONS.—The sanctions described in subsection (b) shall also be imposed on any foreign person that—

(A) is a successor entity to a foreign person described in paragraph (1); or

(B) is owned or controlled by, or has acted for or on behalf of, a foreign person described in paragraph (1).

(b) SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.—The sanctions to be imposed on a foreign person described in subsection (a) are the following:

(1) BLOCKING OF PROPERTY.—The President shall exercise all powers granted by the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) (except that the requirements of section 202 of such Act (50 U.S.C. 1701) shall not apply) to the extent necessary to block and prohibit all transactions in all property and interests in property of the foreign person if such property and interests in property are in the United States, come within the United States, or are or come within the possession or control of a United States person.

(2) ALIENS INELIGIBLE FOR VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.—

(A) EXCLUSION FROM THE UNITED STATES.—If the foreign person is an individual, the Secretary of State shall deny a visa to, and the Secretary of Homeland Security shall exclude from the United States, the foreign person.

(B) CURRENT VISAS REVOKED.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The issuing consular officer, the Secretary of State, or the Secretary of Homeland Security (or a designee of one of such Secretaries) shall revoke any visa or other entry documentation issued to the foreign person regardless of when issued.

(ii) EFFECT OF REVOCATION.—A revocation under clause (i) shall take effect immediately and shall automatically cancel any other valid visa or entry documentation that is in the possession of the foreign person.

(c) WAIVER.—Subject to section 216, the President may waive the application of sanctions under subsection (b) with respect to a person if the President determines that such a waiver is in the national security interest of the United States.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) FINANCIAL, MATERIAL, OR TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT.—The term “financial, material, or technological support” has the meaning given such term in section 542.304 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations (or any corresponding similar regulation or ruling).

(2) FOREIGN PERSON.—The term “foreign person” has the meaning given such term in section 594.304 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations (or any corresponding similar regulation or ruling).

(3) SYRIA.—The term “Syria” has the meaning given such term in section 542.316 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations (or any corresponding similar regulation or ruling).

SEC. 235. SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.

(a) SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.—The sanctions to be imposed with respect to a person under section 224(a)(2), 231(b), 232(a), or 233(a) are the following:

(1) EXPORT-IMPORT BANK ASSISTANCE FOR EXPORTS TO SANCTIONED PERSONS.—The President may direct the Export-Import Bank of the United States not to give approval to the issuance of any guarantee, insurance, extension of credit, or participation in the extension of credit in connection with the export of any goods or services to the sanctioned person.

(2) EXPORT SANCTION.—The President may order the United States Government not to issue any specific license and not to grant any other specific permission or authority to export any goods or technology to the sanctioned person under—

(A) the Export Administration Act of 1979 (50 U.S.C. 4601 et seq.) (as continued in effect pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.));

(B) the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2751 et seq.);

(C) the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (42 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.); or

(D) any other statute that requires the prior review and approval of the United States Government as a condition for the export or reexport of goods or services.

(3) LOANS FROM UNITED STATES FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS.—The President may prohibit any United States financial institution from making loans or providing credits to the sanctioned person totaling more than \$10,000,000 in any 12-month period unless the person is engaged in activities to relieve human suffering and the loans or credits are provided for such activities.

(4) LOANS FROM INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS.—The President may direct the United States executive director to each international financial institution to use the voice and vote of the United States to oppose any loan from the international financial institution that would benefit the sanctioned person.

(5) PROHIBITIONS ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS.—The following prohibitions may be imposed against the sanctioned person if that person is a financial institution:

(A) PROHIBITION ON DESIGNATION AS PRIMARY DEALER.—Neither the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System nor the Federal Reserve Bank of New York may designate, or permit the continuation of any prior designation of, the financial institution as a primary dealer in United States Government debt instruments.

(B) PROHIBITION ON SERVICE AS A REPOSITORY OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS.—The financial institution may not serve as agent of the

United States Government or serve as repository for United States Government funds.

The imposition of either sanction under subparagraph (A) or (B) shall be treated as 1 sanction for purposes of subsection (b), and the imposition of both such sanctions shall be treated as 2 sanctions for purposes of subsection (b).

(6) **PROCUREMENT SANCTION.**—The United States Government may not procure, or enter into any contract for the procurement of, any goods or services from the sanctioned person.

(7) **FOREIGN EXCHANGE.**—The President may, pursuant to such regulations as the President may prescribe, prohibit any transactions in foreign exchange that are subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and in which the sanctioned person has any interest.

(8) **BANKING TRANSACTIONS.**—The President may, pursuant to such regulations as the President may prescribe, prohibit any transfers of credit or payments between financial institutions or by, through, or to any financial institution, to the extent that such transfers or payments are subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and involve any interest of the sanctioned person.

(9) **PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS.**—The President may, pursuant to such regulations as the President may prescribe, prohibit any person from—

(A) acquiring, holding, withholding, using, transferring, withdrawing, transporting, importing, or exporting any property that is subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and with respect to which the sanctioned person has any interest;

(B) dealing in or exercising any right, power, or privilege with respect to such property; or

(C) conducting any transaction involving such property.

(10) **BAN ON INVESTMENT IN EQUITY OR DEBT OF SANCTIONED PERSON.**—The President may, pursuant to such regulations or guidelines as the President may prescribe, prohibit any United States person from investing in or purchasing significant amounts of equity or debt instruments of the sanctioned person.

(11) **EXCLUSION OF CORPORATE OFFICERS.**—The President may direct the Secretary of State to deny a visa to, and the Secretary of Homeland Security to exclude from the United States, any alien that the President determines is a corporate officer or principal of, or a shareholder with a controlling interest in, the sanctioned person.

(12) **SANCTIONS ON PRINCIPAL EXECUTIVE OFFICERS.**—The President may impose on the principal executive officer or officers of the sanctioned person, or on persons performing similar functions and with similar authorities as such officer or officers, any of the sanctions under this subsection.

(b) **SANCTIONED PERSON DEFINED.**—In this section, the term “sanctioned person” means a person subject to sanctions under section 224(a)(2), 231(b), 232(a), or 233(a).

SEC. 236. EXCEPTIONS, WAIVER, AND TERMINATION.

(a) **EXCEPTIONS.**—The provisions of this part and amendments made by this part shall not apply with respect to the following:

(1) Activities subject to the reporting requirements under title V of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3091 et seq.), or any authorized intelligence activities of the United States.

(2) The admission of an alien to the United States if such admission is necessary to comply with United States obligations under the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force November 21, 1947, under the Con-

vention on Consular Relations, done at Vienna April 24, 1963, and entered into force March 19, 1967, or under other international agreements.

(b) **EXCEPTION RELATING TO IMPORTATION OF GOODS.**—No requirement to impose sanctions under this part or an amendment made by this part shall include the authority to impose sanctions on the importation of goods.

(c) **WAIVER OF SANCTIONS THAT ARE IMPOSED.**—Subject to section 216, if the President imposes sanctions with respect to a person under this part or the amendments made by this part, the President may waive the application of those sanctions if the President determines that such a waiver is in the national security interest of the United States.

(d) **TERMINATION.**—Subject to section 216, the President may terminate the application of sanctions under section 224, 231, 232, 233, or 234 with respect to a person if the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

(1) a notice of and justification for the termination; and

(2) a notice that—

(A) the person is not engaging in the activity that was the basis for the sanctions or has taken significant verifiable steps toward stopping the activity; and

(B) the President has received reliable assurances that the person will not knowingly engage in activity subject to sanctions under this part in the future.

SEC. 237. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this part or the amendments made by this part shall be construed—

(1) to supersede the limitations or exceptions on the use of rocket engines for national security purposes under section 1608 of the Carl Levin and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Public Law 113–291; 128 Stat. 3626; 10 U.S.C. 2271 note), as amended by section 1607 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 (Public Law 114–92; 129 Stat. 1100) and section 1602 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (Public Law 114–328; 130 Stat. 2582); or

(2) to prohibit a contractor or subcontractor of the Department of Defense from acquiring components referred to in such section 1608.

PART III—REPORTS

SEC. 241. REPORT ON OLIGARCHS AND PARASTATAL ENTITIES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of State, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a detailed report on the following:

(1) Senior foreign political figures and oligarchs in the Russian Federation, including the following:

(A) An identification of the most significant senior foreign political figures and oligarchs in the Russian Federation, as determined by their closeness to the Russian regime and their net worth.

(B) An assessment of the relationship between individuals identified under subparagraph (A) and President Vladimir Putin or other members of the Russian ruling elite.

(C) An identification of any indices of corruption with respect to those individuals.

(D) The estimated net worth and known sources of income of those individuals and their family members (including spouses, children, parents, and siblings), including assets, investments, other business interests, and relevant beneficial ownership information.

(E) An identification of the non-Russian business affiliations of those individuals.

(2) Russian parastatal entities, including an assessment of the following:

(A) The emergence of Russian parastatal entities and their role in the economy of the Russian Federation.

(B) The leadership structures and beneficial ownership of those entities.

(C) The scope of the non-Russian business affiliations of those entities.

(3) The exposure of key economic sectors of the United States to Russian politically exposed persons and parastatal entities, including, at a minimum, the banking, securities, insurance, and real estate sectors.

(4) The likely effects of imposing debt and equity restrictions on Russian parastatal entities, as well as the anticipated effects of adding Russian parastatal entities to the list of specially designated nationals and blocked persons maintained by the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the Department of the Treasury.

(5) The potential impacts of imposing secondary sanctions with respect to Russian oligarchs, Russian state-owned enterprises, and Russian parastatal entities, including impacts on the entities themselves and on the economy of the Russian Federation, as well as on the economies of the United States and allies of the United States.

(b) **FORM OF REPORT.**—The report required under subsection (a) shall be submitted in an unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex.

(c) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.**—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the Committee on Finance of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, and the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives.

(2) **SENIOR FOREIGN POLITICAL FIGURE.**—The term “senior foreign political figure” has the meaning given that term in section 1010.605 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations (or any corresponding similar regulation or ruling).

SEC. 242. REPORT ON EFFECTS OF EXPANDING SANCTIONS TO INCLUDE SOVEREIGN DEBT AND DERIVATIVE PRODUCTS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of State, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report describing in detail the potential effects of expanding sanctions under Directive 1 (as amended), dated September 12, 2014, issued by the Office of Foreign Assets Control under Executive Order 13662 (79 Fed. Reg. 16169; relating to blocking property of additional persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine), or any successor directive, to include sovereign debt and the full range of derivative products.

(b) **FORM OF REPORT.**—The report required under subsection (a) shall be submitted in an unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex.

(c) **APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.**—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the Committee on Finance of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, and the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 243. REPORT ON ILLICIT FINANCE RELATING TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and not later than the end of each one-year period thereafter until 2021, the Secretary of the Treasury shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report describing interagency efforts in the United States to combat illicit finance relating to the Russian Federation.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The report required by subsection (a) shall contain a summary of efforts by the United States to do the following:

(1) Identify, investigate, map, and disrupt illicit financial flows linked to the Russian Federation if such flows affect the United States financial system or those of major allies of the United States.

(2) Conduct outreach to the private sector, including information sharing efforts to strengthen compliance efforts by entities, including financial institutions, to prevent illicit financial flows described in paragraph (1).

(3) Engage and coordinate with allied international partners on illicit finance, especially in Europe, to coordinate efforts to uncover and prosecute the networks responsible for illicit financial flows described in paragraph (1), including examples of that engagement and coordination.

(4) Identify foreign sanctions evaders and loopholes within the sanctions regimes of foreign partners of the United States.

(5) Expand the number of real estate geographic targeting orders or other regulatory actions, as appropriate, to degrade illicit financial activity relating to the Russian Federation in relation to the financial system of the United States.

(6) Provide support to counter those involved in illicit finance relating to the Russian Federation across all appropriate law enforcement, intelligence, regulatory, and financial authorities of the Federal Government, including by imposing sanctions with respect to or prosecuting those involved.

(7) In the case of the Department of the Treasury and the Department of Justice, investigate or otherwise develop major cases, including a description of those cases.

(c) BRIEFING.—After submitting a report under this section, the Secretary of the Treasury shall provide briefings to the appropriate congressional committees with respect to that report.

(d) COORDINATION.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall coordinate with the Attorney General, the Director of National Intelligence, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Secretary of State in preparing each report under this section.

(e) FORM.—Each report submitted under this section shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex.

(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the Committee on Finance of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, and the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives.

(2) ILLICIT FINANCE.—The term “illicit finance” means the financing of terrorism, narcotics trafficking, or proliferation, money laundering, or other forms of illicit financing domestically or internationally, as defined by the President.

Subtitle B—Countering Russian Influence in Europe and Eurasia**SEC. 251. FINDINGS.**

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Government of the Russian Federation has sought to exert influence throughout Europe and Eurasia, including in the former states of the Soviet Union, by providing resources to political parties, think tanks, and civil society groups that sow distrust in democratic institutions and actors, promote xenophobic and illiberal views, and otherwise undermine European unity. The Government of the Russian Federation has also engaged in well-documented corruption practices as a means toward undermining and buying influence in European and Eurasian countries.

(2) The Government of the Russian Federation has largely eliminated a once-vibrant Russian-language independent media sector and severely curtails free and independent media within the borders of the Russian Federation. Russian-language media organizations that are funded and controlled by the Government of the Russian Federation and disseminate information within and outside of the Russian Federation routinely traffic in anti-Western disinformation, while few independent, fact-based media sources provide objective reporting for Russian-speaking audiences inside or outside of the Russian Federation.

(3) The Government of the Russian Federation continues to violate its commitments under the Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine’s Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, done at Budapest December 5, 1994, and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act, concluded at Helsinki August 1, 1975 (commonly referred to as the “Helsinki Final Act”), which laid the ground-work for the establishment of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, of which the Russian Federation is a member, by its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, its illegal occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia in 2008, and its ongoing destabilizing activities in eastern Ukraine.

(4) The Government of the Russian Federation continues to ignore the terms of the August 2008 ceasefire agreement relating to Georgia, which requires the withdrawal of Russian Federation troops, free access by humanitarian groups to the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and monitoring of the conflict areas by the European Union Monitoring Mission.

(5) The Government of the Russian Federation is failing to comply with the terms of the Minsk Agreement to address the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, signed in Minsk, Belarus, on February 11, 2015, by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany, as well as the Minsk Protocol, which was agreed to on September 5, 2014.

(6) The Government of the Russian Federation is—

(A) in violation of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, signed at Washington December 8, 1987, and entered into force June 1, 1988 (commonly known as the “INF Treaty”); and

(B) failing to meet its obligations under the Treaty on Open Skies, done at Helsinki March 24, 1992, and entered into force January 1, 2002 (commonly known as the “Open Skies Treaty”).

SEC. 252. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the Government of the Russian Federation bears responsibility for the continuing

violence in Eastern Ukraine, including the death on April 24, 2017, of Joseph Stone, a citizen of the United States working as a monitor for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe;

(2) the President should call on the Government of the Russian Federation—

(A) to withdraw all of its forces from the territories of Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova;

(B) to return control of the borders of those territories to their respective governments; and

(C) to cease all efforts to undermine the popularly elected governments of those countries;

(3) the Government of the Russian Federation has applied, and continues to apply, to the countries and peoples of Georgia and Ukraine, traditional uses of force, intelligence operations, and influence campaigns, which represent clear and present threats to the countries of Europe and Eurasia;

(4) in response, the countries of Europe and Eurasia should redouble efforts to build resilience within their institutions, political systems, and civil societies;

(5) the United States supports the institutions that the Government of the Russian Federation seeks to undermine, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union;

(6) a strong North Atlantic Treaty Organization is critical to maintaining peace and security in Europe and Eurasia;

(7) the United States should continue to work with the European Union as a partner against aggression by the Government of the Russian Federation, coordinating aid programs, development assistance, and other counter-Russian efforts;

(8) the United States should encourage the establishment of a commission for media freedom within the Council of Europe, modeled on the Venice Commission regarding rule of law issues, that would be chartered to provide governments with expert recommendations on maintaining legal and regulatory regimes supportive of free and independent media and an informed citizenry able to distinguish between fact-based reporting, opinion, and disinformation;

(9) in addition to working to strengthen the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, the United States should work with the individual countries of Europe and Eurasia—

(A) to identify vulnerabilities to aggression, disinformation, corruption, and so-called hybrid warfare by the Government of the Russian Federation;

(B) to establish strategic and technical plans for addressing those vulnerabilities;

(C) to ensure that the financial systems of those countries are not being used to shield illicit financial activity by officials of the Government of the Russian Federation or individuals in President Vladimir Putin’s inner circle who have been enriched through corruption;

(D) to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption by Russian actors; and

(E) to work toward full compliance with the Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions (commonly referred to as the “Anti-Bribery Convention”) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development; and

(10) the President of the United States should use the authority of the President to impose sanctions under—

(A) the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012 (title IV of Public Law 112–208; 22 U.S.C. 5811 note); and

(B) the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (subtitle F of title XII of Public Law 114–328; 22 U.S.C. 2656 note).

SEC. 253. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

The United States, consistent with the principle of *ex injuria jus non oritur*, supports the policy known as the “Stimson Doctrine” and thus does not recognize territorial changes effected by force, including the illegal invasions and occupations of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Crimea, Eastern Ukraine, and Transnistria.

SEC. 254. COORDINATING AID AND ASSISTANCE ACROSS EUROPE AND EURASIA.

(a) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There are authorized to be appropriated for the Countering Russian Influence Fund \$250,000,000 for fiscal years 2018 and 2019.

(b) **USE OF FUNDS.**—Amounts in the Countering Russian Influence Fund shall be used to effectively implement, prioritized in the following order and subject to the availability of funds, the following goals:

(1) To assist in protecting critical infrastructure and electoral mechanisms from cyberattacks in the following countries:

(A) Countries that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the European Union that the Secretary of State determines—

(i) are vulnerable to influence by the Russian Federation; and

(ii) lack the economic capability to effectively respond to aggression by the Russian Federation without the support of the United States.

(B) Countries that are participating in the enlargement process of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the European Union, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova, Kosovo, Serbia, and Ukraine.

(2) To combat corruption, improve the rule of law, and otherwise strengthen independent judiciaries and prosecutors general offices in the countries described in paragraph (1).

(3) To respond to the humanitarian crises and instability caused or aggravated by the invasions and occupations of Georgia and Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

(4) To improve participatory legislative processes and legal education, political transparency and competition, and compliance with international obligations in the countries described in paragraph (1).

(5) To build the capacity of civil society, media, and other nongovernmental organizations countering the influence and propaganda of the Russian Federation to combat corruption, prioritize access to truthful information, and operate freely in all regions in the countries described in paragraph (1).

(6) To assist the Secretary of State in executing the functions specified in section 1287(b) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (Public Law 114-328; 22 U.S.C. 2656 note) for the purposes of recognizing, understanding, exposing, and countering propaganda and disinformation efforts by foreign governments, in coordination with the relevant regional Assistant Secretary or Assistant Secretaries of the Department of State.

(c) **REVISION OF ACTIVITIES FOR WHICH AMOUNTS MAY BE USED.**—The Secretary of State may modify the goals described in subsection (b) if, not later than 15 days before revising such a goal, the Secretary notifies the appropriate congressional committees of the revision.

(d) **IMPLEMENTATION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of State shall, acting through the Coordinator of United States Assistance to Europe and Eurasia (authorized pursuant to section 601 of the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act of 1989 (22 U.S.C. 5461) and section 102 of the Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1992 (22 U.S.C. 5812)),

and in consultation with the Administrator for the United States Agency for International Development, the Director of the Global Engagement Center of the Department of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and the heads of other relevant Federal agencies, coordinate and carry out activities to achieve the goals described in subsection (b).

(2) **METHOD.**—Activities to achieve the goals described in subsection (b) shall be carried out through—

(A) initiatives of the United States Government;

(B) Federal grant programs such as the Information Access Fund; or

(C) nongovernmental or international organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Black Sea Trust, the Balkan Trust for Democracy, the Prague Civil Society Centre, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, the European Endowment for Democracy, and related organizations.

(3) **REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than April 1 of each year, the Secretary of State, acting through the Coordinator of United States Assistance to Europe and Eurasia, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the programs and activities carried out to achieve the goals described in subsection (b) during the preceding fiscal year.

(B) **ELEMENTS.**—Each report required by subparagraph (A) shall include, with respect to each program or activity described in that subparagraph—

(i) the amount of funding for the program or activity;

(ii) the goal described in subsection (b) to which the program or activity relates; and

(iii) an assessment of whether or not the goal was met.

(e) **COORDINATION WITH GLOBAL PARTNERS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—In order to maximize cost efficiency, eliminate duplication, and speed the achievement of the goals described in subsection (b), the Secretary of State shall ensure coordination with—

(A) the European Union and its institutions;

(B) the governments of countries that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the European Union; and

(C) international organizations and quasi-governmental funding entities that carry out programs and activities that seek to accomplish the goals described in subsection (b).

(2) **REPORT BY SECRETARY OF STATE.**—Not later than April 1 of each year, the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that includes—

(A) the amount of funding provided to each country referred to in subsection (b) by—

(i) the European Union or its institutions;

(ii) the government of each country that is a member of the European Union or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; and

(iii) international organizations and quasi-governmental funding entities that carry out programs and activities that seek to accomplish the goals described in subsection (b); and

(B) an assessment of whether the funding described in subparagraph (A) is commensurate with funding provided by the United States for those goals.

(f) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to or limit United States foreign assistance not provided using amounts available in the Countering Russian Influence Fund.

(g) **ENSURING ADEQUATE STAFFING FOR GOVERNANCE ACTIVITIES.**—In order to ensure that the United States Government is properly focused on combating corruption, improving rule of law, and building the capacity of civil society, media, and other nongovernmental organizations in countries described in subsection (b)(1), the Secretary of State shall establish a pilot program for Foreign Service officer positions focused on governance and anticorruption activities in such countries.

SEC. 255. REPORT ON MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS CONTROLLED AND FUNDED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that includes a description of media organizations that are controlled and funded by the Government of the Russian Federation, and any affiliated entities, whether operating within or outside the Russian Federation, including broadcast and satellite-based television, radio, Internet, and print media organizations.

(b) **FORM OF REPORT.**—The report required by subsection (a) shall be submitted in unclassified form but may include a classified annex.

SEC. 256. REPORT ON RUSSIAN FEDERATION INFLUENCE ON ELECTIONS IN EUROPE AND EURASIA.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on funds provided by, or funds the use of which was directed by, the Government of the Russian Federation or any Russian person with the intention of influencing the outcome of any election or campaign in any country in Europe or Eurasia during the preceding year, including through direct support to any political party, candidate, lobbying campaign, nongovernmental organization, or civic organization.

(b) **FORM OF REPORT.**—Each report required by subsection (a) shall be submitted in unclassified form but may include a classified annex.

(c) **RUSSIAN PERSON DEFINED.**—In this section, the term “Russian person” means—

(1) an individual who is a citizen or national of the Russian Federation; or

(2) an entity organized under the laws of the Russian Federation or otherwise subject to the jurisdiction of the Government of the Russian Federation.

SEC. 257. UKRAINIAN ENERGY SECURITY.

(a) **STATEMENT OF POLICY.**—It is the policy of the United States—

(1) to support the Government of Ukraine in restoring its sovereign and territorial integrity;

(2) to condemn and oppose all of the destabilizing efforts by the Government of the Russian Federation in Ukraine in violation of its obligations and international commitments;

(3) to never recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Government of the Russian Federation or the separation of any portion of Ukrainian territory through the use of military force;

(4) to deter the Government of the Russian Federation from further destabilizing and invading Ukraine and other independent countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus;

(5) to assist in promoting reform in regulatory oversight and operations in Ukraine's energy sector, including the establishment and empowerment of an independent regulatory organization;

(6) to encourage and support fair competition, market liberalization, and reliability in Ukraine's energy sector;

(7) to help Ukraine and United States allies and partners in Europe reduce their dependence on Russian energy resources, especially natural gas, which the Government of the Russian Federation uses as a weapon to coerce, intimidate, and influence other countries;

(8) to work with European Union member states and European Union institutions to promote energy security through developing diversified and liberalized energy markets that provide diversified sources, suppliers, and routes;

(9) to continue to oppose the NordStream 2 pipeline given its detrimental impacts on the European Union's energy security, gas market development in Central and Eastern Europe, and energy reforms in Ukraine; and

(10) that the United States Government should prioritize the export of United States energy resources in order to create American jobs, help United States allies and partners, and strengthen United States foreign policy.

(b) **PLAN TO PROMOTE ENERGY SECURITY IN UKRAINE.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of State, in coordination with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development and the Secretary of Energy, shall work with the Government of Ukraine to develop a plan to increase energy security in Ukraine, increase the amount of energy produced in Ukraine, and reduce Ukraine's reliance on energy imports from the Russian Federation.

(2) **ELEMENTS.**—The plan developed under paragraph (1) shall include strategies for market liberalization, effective regulation and oversight, supply diversification, energy reliability, and energy efficiency, such as through supporting—

(A) the promotion of advanced technology and modern operating practices in Ukraine's oil and gas sector;

(B) modern geophysical and meteorological survey work as needed followed by international tenders to help attract qualified investment into exploration and development of areas with untapped resources in Ukraine;

(C) a broadening of Ukraine's electric power transmission interconnection with Europe;

(D) the strengthening of Ukraine's capability to maintain electric power grid stability and reliability;

(E) independent regulatory oversight and operations of Ukraine's gas market and electricity sector;

(F) the implementation of primary gas law including pricing, tariff structure, and legal regulatory implementation;

(G) privatization of government owned energy companies through credible legal frameworks and a transparent process compliant with international best practices;

(H) procurement and transport of emergency fuel supplies, including reverse pipeline flows from Europe;

(I) provision of technical assistance for crisis planning, crisis response, and public outreach;

(J) repair of infrastructure to enable the transport of fuel supplies;

(K) repair of power generating or power transmission equipment or facilities; and

(L) improved building energy efficiency and other measures designed to reduce energy demand in Ukraine.

(3) **REPORTS.**—

(A) **IMPLEMENTATION OF UKRAINE FREEDOM SUPPORT ACT OF 2014 PROVISIONS.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report detailing the status of im-

plementing the provisions required under section 7(c) of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8926(c)), including detailing the plans required under that section, the level of funding that has been allocated to and expended for the strategies set forth under that section, and progress that has been made in implementing the strategies developed pursuant to that section.

(B) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 180 days thereafter, the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report detailing the plan developed under paragraph (1), the level of funding that has been allocated to and expended for the strategies set forth in paragraph (2), and progress that has been made in implementing the strategies.

(C) **BRIEFINGS.**—The Secretary of State, or a designee of the Secretary, shall brief the appropriate congressional committees not later than 30 days after the submission of each report under subparagraph (B). In addition, the Department of State shall make relevant officials available upon request to brief the appropriate congressional committees on all available information that relates directly or indirectly to Ukraine or energy security in Eastern Europe.

(D) **APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.**—In this paragraph, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(c) **SUPPORTING EFFORTS OF COUNTRIES IN EUROPE AND EURASIA TO DECREASE THEIR DEPENDENCE ON RUSSIAN SOURCES OF ENERGY.**—

(1) **FINDINGS.**—Congress makes the following findings:

(A) The Government of the Russian Federation uses its strong position in the energy sector as leverage to manipulate the internal politics and foreign relations of the countries of Europe and Eurasia.

(B) This influence is based not only on the Russian Federation's oil and natural gas resources, but also on its state-owned nuclear power and electricity companies.

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

(A) the United States should assist the efforts of the countries of Europe and Eurasia to enhance their energy security through diversification of energy supplies in order to lessen dependencies on Russian Federation energy resources and state-owned entities; and

(B) the Export-Import Bank of the United States and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation should play key roles in supporting critical energy projects that contribute to that goal.

(3) **USE OF COUNTERING RUSSIAN INFLUENCE FUND TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.**—Amounts in the Countering Russian Influence Fund pursuant to section 254 shall be used to provide technical advice to countries described in subsection (b)(1) of such section designed to enhance energy security and lessen dependence on energy from Russian Federation sources.

(d) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated for the Department of State a total of \$30,000,000 for fiscal years 2018 and 2019 to carry out the strategies set forth in subsection (b)(2) and other activities under this section related to the promotion of energy security in Ukraine.

(e) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in this section shall be construed as affecting the responsibilities required and authorities

provided under section 7 of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 8926).

SEC. 258. TERMINATION.

The provisions of this subtitle shall terminate on the date that is 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 259. APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.

Except as otherwise provided, in this subtitle, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Select Committee on Intelligence of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Homeland Security, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives.

Subtitle C—Combating Terrorism and Illicit Financing

PART I—NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR COMBATING TERRORIST AND OTHER ILLICIT FINANCING

SEC. 261. DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL STRATEGY.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The President, acting through the Secretary, shall, in consultation with the Attorney General, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of National Intelligence, and the appropriate Federal banking agencies and Federal functional regulators, develop a national strategy for combating the financing of terrorism and related forms of illicit finance.

(b) **TRANSMITTAL TO CONGRESS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a comprehensive national strategy developed in accordance with subsection (a).

(2) **UPDATES.**—Not later than January 31, 2020, and January 31, 2022, the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees updated versions of the national strategy submitted under paragraph (1).

(c) **SEPARATE PRESENTATION OF CLASSIFIED MATERIAL.**—Any part of the national strategy that involves information that is properly classified under criteria established by the President shall be submitted to Congress separately in a classified annex and, if requested by the chairman or ranking member of one of the appropriate congressional committees, as a briefing at an appropriate level of security.

SEC. 262. CONTENTS OF NATIONAL STRATEGY.

The strategy described in section 261 shall contain the following:

(1) **EVALUATION OF EXISTING EFFORTS.**—An assessment of the effectiveness of and ways in which the United States is currently addressing the highest levels of risk of various forms of illicit finance, including those identified in the documents entitled “2015 National Money Laundering Risk Assessment” and “2015 National Terrorist Financing Risk Assessment”, published by the Department of the Treasury and a description of how the strategy is integrated into, and supports, the broader counter terrorism strategy of the United States.

(2) **GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PRIORITIES.**—A comprehensive, research-based, long-range, quantifiable discussion of goals, objectives, and priorities for disrupting and preventing illicit finance activities within and

transiting the financial system of the United States that outlines priorities to reduce the incidence, dollar value, and effects of illicit finance.

(3) **THREATS.**—An identification of the most significant illicit finance threats to the financial system of the United States.

(4) **REVIEWS AND PROPOSED CHANGES.**—Reviews of enforcement efforts, relevant regulations and relevant provisions of law and, if appropriate, discussions of proposed changes determined to be appropriate to ensure that the United States pursues coordinated and effective efforts at all levels of government, and with international partners of the United States, in the fight against illicit finance.

(5) **DETECTION AND PROSECUTION INITIATIVES.**—A description of efforts to improve, as necessary, detection and prosecution of illicit finance, including efforts to ensure that—

(A) subject to legal restrictions, all appropriate data collected by the Federal Government that is relevant to the efforts described in this section be available in a timely fashion to—

(i) all appropriate Federal departments and agencies; and

(ii) as appropriate and consistent with section 314 of the International Money Laundering Abatement and Financial Anti-Terrorism Act of 2001 (31 U.S.C. 5311 note), to financial institutions to assist the financial institutions in efforts to comply with laws aimed at curbing illicit finance; and

(B) appropriate efforts are undertaken to ensure that Federal departments and agencies charged with reducing and preventing illicit finance make thorough use of publicly available data in furtherance of this effort.

(6) **THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE FINANCIAL SECTOR IN PREVENTION OF ILLICIT FINANCE.**—A discussion of ways to enhance partnerships between the private financial sector and Federal departments and agencies with regard to the prevention and detection of illicit finance, including—

(A) efforts to facilitate compliance with laws aimed at stopping such illicit finance while maintaining the effectiveness of such efforts; and

(B) providing guidance to strengthen internal controls and to adopt on an industry-wide basis more effective policies.

(7) **ENHANCEMENT OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION.**—A discussion of ways to combat illicit finance by enhancing—

(A) cooperative efforts between and among Federal, State, and local officials, including State regulators, State and local prosecutors, and other law enforcement officials; and

(B) cooperative efforts with and between governments of countries and with and between multinational institutions with expertise in fighting illicit finance, including the Financial Action Task Force and the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units.

(8) **TREND ANALYSIS OF EMERGING ILLICIT FINANCE THREATS.**—A discussion of and data regarding trends in illicit finance, including evolving forms of value transfer such as so-called cryptocurrencies, other methods that are computer, telecommunications, or Internet-based, cyber crime, or any other threats that the Secretary may choose to identify.

(9) **BUDGET PRIORITIES.**—A multiyear budget plan that identifies sufficient resources needed to successfully execute the full range of missions called for in this section.

(10) **TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENTS.**—An analysis of current and developing ways to leverage technology to improve the effectiveness of efforts to stop the financing of terrorism and other forms of illicit finance, including better integration of open-source data.

PART II—ENHANCING ANTITERRORISM TOOLS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

SEC. 271. IMPROVING ANTITERROR FINANCE MONITORING OF FUNDS TRANSFERS.

(a) **STUDY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—To improve the ability of the Department of the Treasury to better track cross-border fund transfers and identify potential financing of terrorist or other forms of illicit finance, the Secretary shall carry out a study to assess—

(A) the potential efficacy of requiring banking regulators to establish a pilot program to provide technical assistance to depository institutions and credit unions that wish to provide account services to money services businesses serving individuals in Somalia;

(B) whether such a pilot program could be a model for improving the ability of United States persons to make legitimate funds transfers through transparent and easily monitored channels while preserving strict compliance with the Bank Secrecy Act (Public Law 91-508; 84 Stat. 1114) and related controls aimed at stopping money laundering and the financing of terrorism; and

(C) consistent with current legal requirements regarding confidential supervisory information, the potential impact of allowing money services businesses to share certain State examination information with depository institutions and credit unions, or whether another appropriate mechanism could be identified to allow a similar exchange of information to give the depository institutions and credit unions a better understanding of whether an individual money services business is adequately meeting its anti-money laundering and counter-terror financing obligations to combat money laundering, the financing of terror, or related illicit finance.

(2) **PUBLIC INPUT.**—The Secretary should solicit and consider public input as appropriate in developing the study required under subsection (a).

(b) **REPORT.**—Not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Financial Services and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that contains all findings and determinations made in carrying out the study required under subsection (a).

SEC. 272. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION REGARDING TERRORIST FINANCING INTELLIGENCE.

It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary, acting through the Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes, should intensify work with foreign partners to help the foreign partners develop intelligence analytic capacities, in a financial intelligence unit, finance ministry, or other appropriate agency, that are—

(1) commensurate to the threats faced by the foreign partner; and

(2) designed to better integrate intelligence efforts with the anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing regimes of the foreign partner.

SEC. 273. EXAMINING THE COUNTER-TERROR FINANCING ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY IN EMBASSIES.

Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Financial Services

and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that contains—

(1) a list of the United States embassies in which a full-time Department of the Treasury financial attaché is stationed and a description of how the interests of the Department of the Treasury relating to terrorist financing and money laundering are addressed (via regional attachés or otherwise) at United States embassies where no such attachés are present;

(2) a list of the United States embassies at which the Department of the Treasury has assigned a technical assistance advisor from the Office of Technical Assistance of the Department of the Treasury;

(3) an overview of how Department of the Treasury financial attachés and technical assistance advisors assist in efforts to counter illicit finance, to include money laundering, terrorist financing, and proliferation financing; and

(4) an overview of patterns, trends, or other issues identified by the Department of the Treasury and whether resources are sufficient to address these issues.

SEC. 274. INCLUSION OF SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY ON THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 101(c)(1) of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3021(c)(1)) is amended by inserting “the Secretary of the Treasury,” before “and such other officers”.

(b) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**—The amendment made by subsection (a) may not be construed to authorize the National Security Council to have a professional staff level that exceeds the limitation set forth under section 101(e)(3) of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3021(e)(3)).

SEC. 275. INCLUSION OF ALL FUNDS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 5326 of title 31, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the heading of such section, by striking “coin and currency”;

(2) in subsection (a)—

(A) by striking “subtitle and” and inserting “subtitle or to”; and

(B) in paragraph (1)(A), by striking “United States coins or currency (or such other monetary instruments as the Secretary may describe in such order)” and inserting “funds (as the Secretary may describe in such order).”; and

(3) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (1)(A), by striking “coins or currency (or monetary instruments)” and inserting “funds”; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by striking “coins or currency (or such other monetary instruments as the Secretary may describe in the regulation or order)” and inserting “funds (as the Secretary may describe in the regulation or order).”.

(b) **CLERICAL AMENDMENT.**—The table of contents for chapter 53 of title 31, United States Code, is amended in the item relating to section 5326 by striking “coin and currency”.

PART III—DEFINITIONS

SEC. 281. DEFINITIONS.

In this subtitle—

(1) the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, the Committee on Foreign Relations, Committee on Armed Services, Committee on the Judiciary, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, and the Select Committee on Intelligence of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Financial Services, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on the Judiciary, Committee on Homeland Security, and the Permanent Select Committee

on Intelligence of the House of Representatives;

(2) the term “appropriate Federal banking agencies” has the meaning given the term in section 3 of the Federal Deposit Insurance Act (12 U.S.C. 1813);

(3) the term “Bank Secrecy Act” means—

(A) section 21 of the Federal Deposit Insurance Act (12 U.S.C. 1829b);

(B) chapter 2 of title I of Public Law 91–508 (12 U.S.C. 1951 et seq.); and

(C) subchapter II of chapter 53 of title 31, United States Code;

(4) the term “Federal functional regulator” has the meaning given that term in section 509 of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (15 U.S.C. 6809);

(5) the term “illicit finance” means the financing of terrorism, narcotics trafficking, or proliferation, money laundering, or other forms of illicit financing domestically or internationally, as defined by the President;

(6) the term “money services business” has the meaning given the term under section 1010.100 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations;

(7) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Treasury; and

(8) the term “State” means each of the several States, the District of Columbia, and each territory or possession of the United States.

Subtitle D—Rule of Construction

SEC. 291. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this title or the amendments made by this title (other than sections 216 and 236(b)) shall be construed to limit the authority of the President under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.).

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I just want to say to my colleague, the Democratic leader, that I think this is a good example of the Senate at its best. We all know this has been a period of rather partisan sparring back and forth on a variety of different things, but both sides were able to put that aside and deal with two important issues in a very significant way. I think it is good for the Senate and good for the country, and I thank the Democratic leader for his comments.

COUNTERING IRAN'S DESTABILIZING ACTIVITIES ACT OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of S. 722.

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

The clerk will report the bill.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 722) to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell (for Crapo) amendment No. 232, as modified, to impose sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation and to combat terrorism and illicit financing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

U.S. TRAVEL TO CUBA

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, rumor has it that on Friday the President will announce a change in U.S. policy to-

ward Cuba. There are lots of different rumors about what that might entail. I thought I would talk for just a couple of minutes about the consequences of such action, what has been accomplished in Cuba, what our goals are, and what I think our goals should be.

We have had a long policy of isolation with regard to Cuba. For more than 50 years, we tried to isolate the island and hoped the government would change somehow. It didn't. For more than 50 years, we have prohibited Americans from freely traveling to Cuba. We have had periods that the restrictions have gone down a bit and then up again, but by and large Americans have been prohibited, unless they fall into certain classes, to travel to Cuba. Then, when they are in Cuba, their travel around the island, the activities they undertake, are specifically prescribed by the U.S. Government.

I always thought that certainly there is a place for economic sanctions. Sometimes they can help nudge countries or push countries toward a desired outcome—but a travel ban? You only impose a travel ban under extreme circumstances, such as when national security reasons dictate, and there hasn't, for a long time, been national security reasons for a travel ban. I have always thought that as an American citizen that if somebody is going to limit my travel, it ought to be a Communist, somebody from another country that wouldn't let me in, not my own government to tell me where I can and cannot travel. I think most Americans feel that way.

I think we ought to first consider whom these sanctions are on. The sanctions we have had for so many years have not really been on Cubans; they have been on Americans. Gratefully, the previous administration lessened these restrictions or lessened the impact around them. Around 2008 or 2009, the last administration said that Cuban Americans should be able to travel freely at least. Prior to that, we had instances where Cuban Americans would have to decide, if their parents, for example, were still in Cuba and were aging, maybe their mother was infirm—they had to decide if my mother passes away, do I attend her funeral or if my father passes away within 3 years—see, it used to be that Cuban Americans were limited to travel to the island just once every 3 years. They had to decide whether to attend their mother's funeral or their father's funeral. What a terrible thing for our government to tell American citizens, that they have to choose whether to attend their father's funeral or their mother's funeral. What kind of a country is that? Why would we do that? Yet we did for a number of years.

Gratefully, the last administration lifted restrictions on Cuban-American travel and at the same time lifted considerable restrictions on remittances, allowing money to flow more freely to relatives and others on the island. That

coincided with the time the Cuban Government realized they couldn't employ every Cuban, not even at \$20 a month, so they said: Go ahead and find another line of work in the private sector, run a bed and breakfast, have a private restaurant, have an auto repair facility or a beauty shop. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans have done so over the past 5 years, largely with seed capital provided by travel from Americans, particularly Cuban-American travel and remittances.

So there was a situation where virtually no Cuban was employed in the private sector 5 years ago, but today as much as 25 percent of the Cuban workforce is now in the private sector. They have obviously more economic freedom. The average waiter in a Cuban private restaurant brings in \$40 to \$50 a day, while the average Cuban working for the Cuban Government brings in \$20 to \$30 a month. So there is significantly more economic freedom for those in the private sector in Cuba but also significantly more personal freedom as well. That is a good thing. That stands with the policy and goal we always had to increase freedom for the Cuban people.

Now we hear that the administration may want to turn back some of that progress and say that Americans shouldn't be able to travel as freely or as frequently to Cuba. Some of the rumors say they will limit travel to once a year. We don't know if that will be for Cuban Americans or all Americans. By the way, it seems rather strange to have a policy that is ethnically based, where we say: You are a Cuban American, you can travel, but if you are another type of American, you can't. That just seems pretty un-American. We can't get back into a situation where a Cuban American, living in the United States, will have to choose whether they can attend their mother or their father's funeral. I hope we don't get back into that time.

Another thing we ought to consider is that when Americans travel more freely, as they have been able to do under what is called a general license for individual travelers—that was one of the changes that was made in just the past couple of years—then individual American travelers tend to go to Cuba and stay in a bed and breakfast run by a private Cuban citizen, travel in private taxi cabs, frequent a private restaurant. My own family has done that.

If we go back to the time when American travelers have to travel under a specific license or as a group, then those travelers will be pushed toward the Cuban hotels which are owned by the Cuban Government or military. Therefore, you have aided the Cuban Government more than the Cuban people. Under no system will you be able to cut off money completely from the Cuban Government or the private sector. There is leakage everywhere. That is how economies work. Why in the world do we have a policy where we directly benefit the Cuban Government

by pushing American travelers to the hotels they own rather than the private homes owned by private Cuban citizens? It seems to me these policies, if they are going to come forward—and it seems that they might be—just go against the policies and the goals we have.

Another thing we need to consider is that in the old times, when we had more restrictive policies on travel on Americans, those had to be enforced somehow. That falls upon the Office of Foreign Assets Control at Treasury.

OFAC, you may have heard recently, is the office we charge to enforce our sanctions on Iran. We are putting new sanctions on Iran. They will be charged with enforcing those. They will be charged with enforcing sanctions on Russia and new sanctions on Russia as well. Sanctions on North Korea, again, falls to OFAC. Yet we are telling OFAC that now they are going to have to spend a considerable amount of time and resources and manpower tracking down people going to Cuba to see if they stick to their designated, approved itinerary, whatever that might be, whatever we think they ought to be doing there, rather than what they want to be doing there. That just seems foolish to me and a waste of money, time and resources, and wrong-headed priorities with regard to other priorities that we have on sanctions.

We had situations in previous years that would simply be laughable if they weren't true, but I think the administration ought to consider that when we have a restrictive policy on travel, we are going to have situations that are just flat embarrassing to us. If that sounds crazy, it doesn't sound crazy to Joan Slote of San Diego, who traveled to Cuba in the year 2000 at the age of 72 with a Canadian company that organized cycling tours. She was fined \$7,500 in the United States because she hadn't preapproved the itinerary and didn't follow the guidelines. She went through a Canadian company to do that. The subsequent fees totaled nearly \$10,000. I think it was settled for something less, but why in the world are we sanctioning and fining a 72-year-old woman who went on a biking tour in Cuba.

Consider the case of Cevin Allen in the State of Washington. He spent part of his childhood in Cuba, where his parents were missionaries. They built an Assembly of God Church in a town in southeastern Cuba. His parents died in 1987 in a house fire. Ten years later, Allen traveled to Cuba to scatter the ashes of his parents at the church they had built. He also brought a family Bible to give to the church's pastor. Cevin returned to the United States via Nassau, Bahamas, where he told U.S. agents he had just been to Cuba. He told them the reasons for his travel. His initial fine was \$7,500.

Do we really want to be fining people who are scattering the ashes of their parents? These aren't isolated incidents. This went on for a while.

A woman from Indiana was fined for distributing Bibles in Cuba because her itinerary didn't include a trip to the beach. She went to the beach, I am told, to participate or to watch a baptism that was happening at that time. Why in the world would we try to limit that kind of travel? Yet that is what we would be doing if we go back to restricting travel.

Maybe these rumors are overblown. Maybe we will not be imposing new restrictions on travel, but if we are, I hope the administration will consider these things.

There is another rumor out there that we know that if we diminish American travel, therefore diminishing the amount of money that goes to these Cuban entrepreneurs who are running bed and breakfasts and private restaurants, then we can make up for it somehow by having some of our government agencies teach entrepreneurship classes. Anybody who has been in Cuba understands that Cubans who have survived on \$20 a month for decades are more entrepreneurial than we will ever be. They don't need lessons in entrepreneurship, they need customers, and by denying Americans the freedom to travel to Cuba, we will be denying them customers, and they will be worse off. Their political freedom will be diminished. Their economic freedom will be diminished. Their personal freedom will be diminished. That is not what we want.

Obviously, we want the Cuban Government to change. It has been disappointing, the rate of change. Why would we take it out on the Cuban people? Don't they have it tough enough with a Communist government that wants to control and keep that control as long as they can? Why don't we continue to help the Cuban people as they have been helped over the past couple of years? We also want to consider the cooperation we have with the Cuban Government with regard to issues such as drug interdiction, environmental cooperation, immigration enforcement. In the past couple of years, we had a lot of Cubans rafting to South Florida because of the wet foot, dry foot policy. We have had tens of thousands of Cubans crossing the Mexican border to make it to Arizona or Texas or California or New Mexico to claim or to be paroled into our system and ultimately perhaps to get citizenship. Because of agreements we have had and the diplomatic cooperation we have had over the past couple of years, and specifically over the past couple of months, we have been able to reach an agreement where we don't have that kind of migration and those kinds of issues. So there are tangible benefits to the diplomatic cooperation we have had. I am told we are not going to touch that; that we are not going to roll back. We have diplomatic relations and that is a good thing.

We don't want to go back to the time where instead of an embassy, we had a special interests section in Cuba and

the Cubans had one here. I hope the President of the United States and his Cabinet will consider these things as they make decisions on what to do on Cuba. There are changes to policy we can make, but I would argue they would be more in terms of further liberalizing travel. We have a bill that has been filed in the Senate with 55 cosponsors. It is a bipartisan bill to completely lift the travel ban and get rid of it completely. If such a measure is brought to the floor, I am confident there will be between 65 and 70 votes—maybe more—for such a bill. Instead, we seem to be going in the other direction or the administration is talking about going in the other direction. I hope they will reconsider.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMENDMENT NO. 232, AS MODIFIED

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, Russia remains a hostile, recalcitrant power that deploys its military, its cyber espionage activities, and its economic tactics to harm the United States of America—to drive a wedge between us and our allies.

President Obama began to impose tough sanctions for Russia's cyber attacks, its cyber intrusion, its illegal annexation of Crimea, and its continuing aggression in Ukraine and Syria. Congress joined in that effort by enacting two measures to tighten and broaden those sanctions. Lifting and relaxing those sanctions now would only reward Russia's attempts to undermine our democracy.

The administration continues to exercise a policy of strategic ambiguity when it comes to Russia, and the President, putting it mildly, has sent mixed signals. Just last month, Gary Cohn, the President's senior economic adviser, seemed to suggest that the United States could relax sanctions on Russia, and, as press reports confirmed 2 weeks ago, in its early days, the Trump administration considered removing all measures against Russia, according to former administration officials. Think of that.

We all hear the discussion—maybe collusion, maybe not—about the Russians' friendship with the administration, whether the Trump family or the Trump businesses or the Trump White House has had some kind of relationships—almost everybody here thinks—with the oilmen, with the oligarchs, with the Kremlin, maybe even Putin himself. And to think that soon after taking office, before the public and the rest of us began to start learning more about Trump's ties with Russia, the administration considered the removal of any kind of measures punishing Russia.

This amendment, written by Senators CRAPO, CORKER, CARDIN, me, and our offices and our staffs, sends an unambiguous message that the United States will not accept Russia's continued aggression, will adopt tough measures to both punish its past actions and deter future aggression against our country and our allies.

Over the last week, the chairs and ranking members of key Senate committees conducted intense negotiations over a package of tough and meaningful reforms and expansions to our current Russia sanctions regime. We have had good, positive, productive, bipartisan conversations. Last night we reached agreement on this broad package of new measures that substantially expands sanctions on Russia in response to its malicious cyber attacks, efforts to undermine democracy, and continuing aggression in Syria and in eastern Ukraine. This package assures Congress and the people we represent that we have more of a say in this critical national security debate.

The amendment would do a number of things. It would codify and strengthen six existing Obama administration Executive orders on Russia and Ukraine and on Russian cyber activities and the sanctions flowing from them.

It would provide for strict congressional review of any effort by the President to relax and suspend and terminate or waive Russian sanctions patterned after the Iran Review Act.

It would require mandatory imposition of sanctions on malicious cyber activity against the United States, on corrupt Russian actors around the world, on foreign sanctions evaders violating the Russia, Ukraine, and cyber-related sanctions controls, on those involved in serious human rights abuses in territories forcibly controlled by Russia, and on special Russian crude oil projects around the world.

It would authorize broad new sanctions on key sectors of Russia's economy, including mining, metals, shipping, and railways, as well as new investments in energy pipelines.

It would crack down on anyone investing in corrupt privatization efforts in Russia—something we have seen a lot of over 20 years.

It would broaden the Treasury Department's authority to impose geographic targeting orders, allowing investigators to obtain ATM and wire transfer records so Treasury can better target illicit activity of Russian oligarchs in the United States.

It would require Treasury to provide Congress with a study on the tangled web of senior government officials from Russia and their family members and any current U.S. economic exposures to Russian oligarchs and their investments, and that includes real estate.

It would require the administration to assess and report to Congress on extending secondary sanctions to additional Russian oligarchs and state-owned and related enterprises.

Since 2014, Congress has worked together—Republicans and Democrats—to craft increasingly tougher sanctions to hold Russia accountable for a long line of misdeeds. It is a long line indeed, from Russia's violations of international law and of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, to its role in the brutal repression in the war in Syria, to the cyber attacks that we are learning more and more about on Americans.

The Ukrainian community in my State—vibrant, successful, progressive—and around the world knows firsthand the dangers of unchecked Russian aggression. We should strengthen—not weaken, not relax, not peel back—Russian sanctions.

I urge my colleagues here and in the House to support this amendment, and I will urge the President to sign it into law. We must continue to vigorously enforce and strengthen sanctions against Russia to send a message to its leaders and the world that the United States of America will not tolerate efforts to undermine democracy around the world.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mr. President, our democracy is founded on checks and balances—and not just among the branches of government. Our Founders enshrined the freedom of the press in the Bill of Rights for a reason. We can't have a functioning democracy without freedom of the press. That is why last week the Newseum marked its annual Day Without News to remind Americans what our country would be—what we would be like, what we would look like, how we would act—without a free press.

Journalists' entire job is to ask tough questions and to challenge powerful interests. While in church, we comfort the afflicted, journalists afflict the comfortable. Reporters put their safety and far too often their lives on the line, whether it is covering floods and hurricanes at home or traversing the globe to bring us the stories of our troops. We depend on reporters in Ohio and around the world to both bring us the stories that impact our day-to-day lives and to tell the stories that simply otherwise might not be told.

Supporting a vibrant, independent, proactive press corps has rarely been more important in our country. Yet, too often we see reporters restricted, vilified, attacked, and even physically threatened, all for doing the jobs for which they were hired.

Today brought news in this body that some people in this building—some Members of the Senate—are trying to bar reporters from asking Senators questions. This is outrageous. If Senators can't handle tough questions from reporters about their plans to take healthcare away from millions of Americans, maybe they should change the bill, not restrict the reporters.

We remember that Oval Office meeting with Russian officials. We have seen the pictures of the President of

the United States with the Russian Foreign Minister, with the Russian Ambassador. We have seen those pictures, but what we need to remember about those pictures—those photos that ran on front pages around this country and all over the world—those photos weren't taken by American journalists. The President of the United States threw them out of the Oval Office. Those pictures were taken by the Russian state media.

The Russian state media was allowed to be in the room with the President of the United States in the Oval Office—hallowed ground in our democracy—while the American press was thrown out. The Russian state media, the old Soviet news agency, TASS, the remnants of the old Soviet propaganda machine, was allowed in, while the American press was barred. When you hide from the press, you hide from the American people.

On November 16, a group representing more than a dozen journalist organizations sent a letter to the President-elect. They wrote: "This isn't about access for the press itself, it's about access for Americans in diverse communities around the country."

Having a strong, independent White House and congressional press corps isn't just important for those reporters' stories. Think about the signal it sends to mayors and city council members and State legislators. If the Members of Congress—the President, by throwing press out of the Oval Office and bringing in the old Soviet news agency TASS, or the Senate, by throwing reporters out of the Senate—if they don't have to be accountable, why should a mayor, why should a city council person, why should a Governor think they should be accountable?

It is not just Washington reporters who are vital to democracy. It is reporters in Ohio telling us the stories, bringing us the faces of the opioid epidemic that devastates families and communities. It is Ohio's editorial pages highlighting how important the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is to our drinking water and our State's economy. It has enabled Senator PORTMAN and me and bipartisan Senators all over the Great Lakes, from New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota—Senators from both parties fighting back and stopping the cuts that would have destroyed so much of the progress in cleaning up the Great Lakes. It is journalists in every corner of my State highlighting the devastation that the proposed budget would have on our schools and our housing and rural communities. It is emphasizing again that 200,000 Ohioans right now are getting opioid treatment because they have insurance from the Affordable Care Act. It is reminding politicians in Ohio of both parties that those people need insurance. That is what a free press does.

Parenthetically, I would add, my wife is a journalist. She is a Pulitzer Prize

winner. She is a columnist. She is soon to be a novelist. She clearly has outspoken views about this, as I do. She is a member of the press. I am a Member of this body. We both believe in a free press. We both believe in a free democracy.

We answer to journalists in this body because they are the eyes and ears of the people we serve. If you can't understand—if none of us are strong enough and articulate enough and gutsy enough to stand before reporters who ask tough questions about your positions, then maybe you ought to rethink your positions.

We need diligent, courageous reporters to dig up their stories. We need independent editors to put them on front pages. We need media organizations willing to hold the powerful accountable.

The American people have a right to know what is going on in their own government, from the White House down to the city council office.

The behavior today of the Rules Committee—the Rules Committee decision to ban reporters—television reporters specifically—from this body is just reprehensible. Thomas Jefferson said, “Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.” That is as true today as it was more than 200 years ago at the time of our country's founding.

To all of the reporters out there, thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

AMENDMENT NO. 232, AS MODIFIED

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I am glad to be down here with our ranking member, Senator BEN CARDIN from Maryland. I want to thank him and his staff for working until 10:20 last night to complete negotiations on a Russia amendment. I want to thank Senator CRAPO and his staff and Senator BROWN and his staff for the work they did on the sanctions component, where over the last 5 months they have worked with our counterparts around the world to make sure that what we did in this piece of legislation was something that was workable. Truly, I think it has been a great effort by four different offices. I am glad that cloture has been filed on that amendment, and I understand we are going to vote on it tomorrow at 2 o'clock.

I will be very brief. Senator CARDIN and I are here on the floor together, and I know he wants to make some comments about this. Let me just give a brief summary, if I could.

The amendment enhances Congress's role in determining sanctions policy on Russia. It provides for the President to use a national security waiver or sanctions termination after giving Congress 30 days to review the proposed action.

I think everyone here knows I am a strong proponent of congressional review. We began that under President Obama. To me, it gets us in a place where we are playing an appropriate role in foreign policy.

The amendment codifies existing sanctions on Russia for their activities in Ukraine and cyber space.

The amendment strengthens and expands existing conduct-based sanctions by requiring the imposition of sanctions on actors undermining cyber security, supplying arms to Syria, human rights abusers, and those involved in corrupt privatization of government-owned assets.

It mandates sanctions on Russian deep-water, Arctic, and shale projects worldwide and yet allows for waivers to be made based on national security interests of the United States.

This amendment prioritizes U.S. foreign assistance to allies in their fight against Russian aggression. This is something I know Senator CARDIN worked hard on, and I appreciate his efforts.

It authorizes \$250 million to establish the Countering Russian Influence Fund to implement programs in EU and NATO member countries—Senator PORTMAN played a role in this as well, and I appreciate his efforts—as well as candidate nations, to combat Russian interference, with a priority given to programs that develop cyber security, address public corruption, respond to humanitarian crises, counter disinformation, and support democratic institutions.

It requires the State Department and other Federal agencies to collaborate and develop a plan to reduce Ukraine's dependence on Russian energy imports, which we know Russia has used to extort Ukraine.

I think it is a very good piece of legislation. I appreciate the contributions of many Members here. I know Senator MCCAIN, Senator GRAHAM, Senator RUBIO, and so many people here have been involved in wanting to produce legislation that pushes back in this way. We have tried to utilize the best of many bills that have been put forth.

Again, I cannot thank the ranking member and his staff enough for the way they have worked with us to get us to this point.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I just want to follow up briefly with Chairman CORKER. The two of us became friends in 2007, when we were both elected to the U.S. Senate the same year and were part of the same class. But I think the two of us really became close friends a little over 2 years ago, when we were confronted with how Congress should deal with the nuclear agreement being negotiated by President Obama with Iran and our European friends, along with Russia and China.

As the two of us worked around the clock to try to develop an appropriate review process so that Congress could play a constructive role—we recognize that we are the legislative branch, and we have oversight functions, but there is an appropriate role for us with regard to Executive actions—we came

out with something that no one expected could be done; that is, nearly unanimous support in this body for a review statute in regard to the Iran negotiations.

Chairman CORKER has taken this same template and has now used that to apply to Russia in the removal of sanctions on Russia. It started with a bill that was put together by Senator GRAHAM and me. It has been modified through the negotiations we have had, as Senator CORKER has commented, with Senator BROWN and Senator CRAPO. But it does, in effect, provide that there will be notice to Congress before the administration can give any sanction relief to Russia, so there can be transparency and a discussion and a debate. Then there is a process by which Congress, if we feel strongly and can get the necessary support, can disapprove of sanction relief.

I think that is the proper way for us to deal with one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world—between the United States and Russia—and it is appropriate that it is going to be an amendment to the Iran sanctions bill because the review process came out of the Iran agreement.

The review process would be triggered if there is action taken by the President to give relief, but the legislation also includes additional sanctions, as the chairman pointed out, with Russia. It does this in a way that codifies the President's Executive orders so that there is now congressional support for Executive orders. It expands those sanctions in the area of cyber, as the chairman pointed out, and for energy projects, financial institutions facilitating transactions, Russian arms and related materiel to Syria, the corrupt privatization of government-owned assets.

I particularly thank the chairman for the way he was able to recognize that, in Russia, what we don't want to see us contribute to is corruption, and we concentrate on the corruption issue, not the business issue. It is the area of corruption that becomes the important thing.

We tighten up a lot of the different sanctions. Then we set up a process where there needs to be certified progress made; otherwise, these are mandatory sanctions the President must impose.

As the chairman pointed out, negotiations included aspects of legislation that was first introduced by Senator MCCAIN and me on sanctions, by Senator GRAHAM and me on review of sanction relief, by Senators CRAPO and BROWN on proposed legislation dealing with sanctions, and Chairman CORKER had significant drafting issues that he brought to the table in our negotiations. So it was a free discussion, and the end result is—I said this before but I want to underscore this—the Banking Committee brought some very helpful suggestions to make sure the financial sanctions worked. It is one thing that we want to make sure there are penalties, but we have to make sure they

work right, and I compliment the work of the Banking Committee in making sure that we use the right standards and that this will meet international muster. It is absolutely essential that this template be one in which our European allies can follow our leadership. If we didn't do that, we could have been isolated, which would not have had the same impact as I think these sanctions will have in working with our European allies.

The chairman mentioned several of our colleagues on the committee. I need to mention Senator SHAHEEN and Senator MENENDEZ, who played very, very important roles in our caucus. Senator DURBIN and Senator SCHUMER also played roles in this, and I acknowledge their contributions.

Included in this bill is the democracy initiative, which deals with providing more unified support with our allies in Europe in fighting Russia's propaganda and attacks on our democratic institutions. Senator PORTMAN made major contributions to that, as the chairman has also acknowledged, and then, brought to us mainly through the Banking bill, we have a strategy to trace terrorism and financing in terrorism, which I think is very important to be included in the amendment.

We will have a chance to vote on this amendment at 2 o'clock tomorrow. I encourage my colleagues to adopt this. Senator CORKER and I expect to be back on the floor tomorrow as we manage the underlying bill, at which time I will want to comment on the importance of our passing the Iran sanctions bill, which is vitally important because of Iranian activities taking place today.

For all of those reasons, I encourage my colleagues to please read the amendment that has been filed in a bipartisan effort to deal with this challenge that Russia has provided through their activities in attacking our democratic institutions, in their continued aggression in Ukraine, and their human rights violations in Syria.

I might add that Senator MENENDEZ's provisions on human rights sanctions are included in this amendment. It really does, I think, capture the essence of the broad consensus of the U.S. Senate and is worthy of our support.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I thank my friend for his comments. Again, I wish to reiterate that the Banking staff, Senator CRAPO and his staff, and Senator BROWN and his staff did an outstanding job of focusing on sanctions that would work in the appropriate way, as was just laid out, and really brought out the best of the two committees to come up with the legislation that we have.

I hope we will have a very strong vote tomorrow. I think this very much supports U.S. foreign policy. I look forward to that taking place tomorrow at 2 o'clock.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues, Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN, for their fine work on the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act, of course, and then this Russia amendment that so many of us have been pushing for so long. I especially thank Senator CARDIN for his leadership on that, as well as Senator BROWN and Senator CRAPO—and the work that Senator MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER did, as well as a lot of members of the Foreign Relations Committee, who care a lot about this.

As I look at this, I look first at the Iranian part of the underlying bill. We have had many disagreements in the last few years on the Iranian nuclear agreement, but it is now critical. This is the time for those who opposed the agreement and those who supported it to come together to ensure that all of the parties to the agreement are upholding their obligations.

When the United States and our allies agreed to the Iranian nuclear agreement, we made it clear that we will continue to hold Iran accountable for its nefarious activities outside of the four corners of the agreement. We must hold Iran accountable for missile tests, for financing terrorism, and human rights violations. That is our job, and that is why I was an early cosponsor of the legislation before the Senate today.

The Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act of 2017 imposes mandatory sanctions on those involved with Iran's ballistic missile program, as well as those who fund terrorist organizations and commit human rights violations. Iran's ballistic missile program is a threat to regional and global security, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 makes it illegal for Iran to develop ballistic missiles that could carry a nuclear weapon. Any person or business involved in helping Iran obtain illegal weapons should be banned from doing business with the United States, have their assets immediately frozen, and their travel restricted.

Minimizing the threat Iran poses also means holding it accountable for funding terrorist groups that threaten Israel and seek to destabilize the region. We should be doing everything in our power to better track terrorist financing so we can stop the flow of money that funds suicide bombers and illicit weapons.

Our mission here is clear: We must protect our own citizens and our allies by enacting strong legislation to ensure that Iran does not cheat on its international commitment. Iran must know that if it violates the rules, it will be held accountable.

Democrats and Republicans have come together to get this done, and it is my hope that we can pass the legislation this week, including the amendment imposing strong sanctions against Russia, which is essential to

protecting our democracy from foreign interference.

Seventeen United States intelligence agencies have confirmed that Russia tried to interfere in the 2016 election. That is not all. We know Russia is using covert cyber attacks, espionage, and harmful propaganda to try to undermine our democracy. They launched cyber attacks against local election systems, a U.S. voting systems software company, and the emails of more than 100 local election officials. Russian-backed criminals hacked into Yahoo and stole data from 500 million accounts. They repeatedly harassed American diplomats in Moscow.

The former Director of Intelligence, James Clapper, recently testified that Russia will continue to interfere in our political system. This is what he said:

I believe [Russia is] now emboldened to continue such activities in the future both here and around the world and to do so even more intensely. If there has ever been a clarion call for vigilance and action against a threat to the very foundation of our democratic political system, this episode is it.

Vigilance—that is what we need right now. That is why I joined a bipartisan group of my colleagues to introduce the Countering Russian Hostilities Act, legislation that would impose strong sanctions against Russia. These sanctions would address Russia's cyber attacks, its human rights violations, and its illegal annexation of land in Ukraine and Georgia.

I am also the cosponsor of the Russia Sanctions Review Act, bipartisan legislation that would require congressional review if sanctions against Russia are rolled back.

The Russia sanctions amendment offered today contains essential portions of both of these pieces of legislation.

After those 17 intelligence agencies confirmed that Russia interfered in our elections, President Obama enacted important sanctions against officials in the Russian Government and hackers conducting malicious cyber activity on behalf of the Russian Government. The amendment before us today would codify those sanctions. The amendment also strengthens sanctions against Russia's energy sector, corrupt Russian officials, and those who supply weapons to the Assad regime.

The day the Obama administration was imposing these additional sanctions on Russia, I was actually with Senators MCCAIN and GRAHAM in Eastern Europe. The goal of our trip was to reinforce support for NATO and our allies in the face of increased Russian aggression. On the trip, we went to the Baltics, Ukraine, and Georgia, countries on the frontlines of these fights. They know Russia's playbook well.

In our meetings with Presidents and Prime Ministers of these countries, it was increasingly evident that if we don't stop Russia now, cyber attacks against governments, political parties, newspapers, and companies will only get worse. We heard about websites being shut down and internet access

limited when one government—the Government of Estonia—simply had the audacity to move a bronze statue from a public square to a cemetery. It was of a Russian fighter. The Russian Government didn't like it, so they cut down their internet access.

Also, there were members of the Ukrainian Parliament who were invited to Lithuania. What happened to the Lithuanians in the Parliament? They were hacked into. Ukraine itself was targeted by Russian hackers more than 6,500 times over a 2-month period.

Most recently, Russia tried to undermine elections in France.

For years, our allies have been subjected to Russian aggression and invasion. But they are undeterred, unwilling to give up on that which they fought so hard for—*independence, freedom, democracy.*

So this is not just about defending our own democracy, as we look at these Russia sanctions that are before us today, as we look at the investigation that is ongoing and looking into the interference into our election. It is about defending a democratic way of life and democracies across the world. It is not just about the simple word “election” or the simple word “democracy.” It is not just about one candidate or one political party. As Senator RUBIO has noted, the next time it will be the other party.

No, this is about our Constitution. It is about our own independence from foreign powers. It is about freedom and the rights guaranteed to us in our own Constitution. If that is undermined, if foreign governments are allowed to come in and handpick who their candidate is based on either propaganda or cyber attacks, then we lose our constitutional rights because we the people are no longer determining who our representatives are. Other countries are.

The world continues to look to America for our steadfast leadership. The United States—a beacon for freedom and democracy—must continue to stand up against Russian aggression, not just in word but in deed. That is why it is so important that the Senate is coming together today to pass strong sanctions against the Russian Government. We want the Russian people to be able to have a democracy. We want them to be able to have a democracy that doesn't do things like bring down planes in Ukraine, that doesn't do things like try to influence other countries' elections. That is why these sanctions are so important.

We know that the Russian Government today is actively working to undermine our democracy and hurt American businesses. This is part of the cyber war. We know that this unprecedented interference has been orchestrated by the Kremlin so that Americans actually lose faith in our own political system. Over time, Russia has grown more determined in its effort to weaken democracies in its expanded sphere of influence. Now, more than

ever, Americans are looking to the Senate for leadership. We must stand strong and united so that Russia and other nations know that attacks against our democracy must not go unchecked. The amendment before us on the sanctions is an important step in doing just that.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

U.S.-MEXICO SUGAR AGREEMENT

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to express my considerable disappointment with the U.S.-Mexico sugar agreement that was announced just last week. This deal was concluded recently. The fact is that this is a bad deal for the United States. I am completely mystified as to why our Commerce Department would agree to it. It is a bad deal for U.S. consumers, and we are all consumers. It is a bad deal for American workers.

It completely fails to address the high price of sugar that we have in America today. In fact, it makes the problem worse. It increases the price that we all have to pay for sugar. It reduces choices for consumers, and it absolutely threatens jobs in the many food-producing industries that we have across our country. What it does is that it continues the protectionist policies that favor a handful of big sugar producers and refiners.

These are large, agribusiness companies, generally, already subsidized by domestic agricultural policies that force American consumers to pay artificially inflated prices for their products. It also limits imports, and the fact is that the agreement should be doing just the opposite. It should be giving us a free market in sugar so that American consumers can shop for the best deal available in the world, and that is exactly what it does not do.

Unfortunately, what they did at the Commerce Department is they failed to prioritize the concerns of ordinary American consumers, ordinary American workers. The fact is that the United States is a significant net importer of sugar. We are a huge country, and we don't produce as much sugar as we consume. So we import the difference. Mexico happens to be the No. 1 source of imported sugar. We get about 35 percent of our imported sugar from Mexico. The NAFTA trade agreement provided for free trade in sugar. It took a long time to get there, but it contemplated an arrangement where Mexico could sell to American consumers—like my wife, when she goes shopping at the store, and all of our families—without duties, without tariffs, without taxes, without obstacles.

But that didn't work out so well for some of the sugar producers. So they

went to court, and they accused Mexico of dumping sugar.

In order to avoid tariffs, the Mexican Government agreed to what they call the suspension agreement. It is an agreement that basically sets a minimum price.

So that is what we do. That is our sugar policy. The government dictates it, essentially, in conjunction with foreign governments. It is the American Government that has all the leverage here. We set prices. We fix prices. We don't have a free market. We establish, by central government fiat, what the price will be.

We also establish import quotas. We decide how much of foreign sugar an American will be permitted to buy, reminiscent of “Moscow on the Mississippi.” This is not how you have a free market that allows consumers to have the choices and the benefits from lower competition.

I was concerned about where this negotiation was heading. So Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN, a Democratic Senator from New Hampshire, and I sent a letter to Commerce Secretary Ross to urge him to consider the impact on consumers—which is all of us, I will reiterate—in negotiating this deal. There was a similar letter from House Members. Unfortunately, it apparently did not persuade our Commerce Department. In fact, this new agreement—as I think I mentioned—leaves us with a policy that is worse than it was before. This new so-called suspension agreement increases the already-inflated price of sugar—2 percent higher for raw sugar and 8 percent higher for refined sugar if it is imported from Mexico.

How does it help the 320 million Americans? How does it help ordinary Americans to be forced to pay more for the sugar that we all have to buy? It is a staple in our food. The answer is that it doesn't help. It hurts the single mom who is going to the grocery store to buy cereal for her kids when she has to pay approximately twice the price of the global price for sugar. Where does that money go? It goes straight out of her pocket and straight into the pockets of this handful of wealthy sugar producers in America. So it is absolutely bad policy for American consumers.

Make no mistake about it. Higher prices for Mexican sugar mean higher prices for American consumers—all of us. The Coalition for Sugar Reform estimates that the new agreement—just the new agreement—will cost U.S. consumers an additional billion dollars a year. That goes straight to the growers, the producers. As I said, U.S. sugar prices are already almost double the world prices, generally, because of the ridiculous agricultural policy we have with respect to sugar. The American Enterprise Institute reports that they believe that the current policy already costs U.S. consumers \$3 billion a year. So you have the \$3 billion a year from this flawed policy we used to have. Now we just added another billion dollars a

year in costs to our consumers by virtue of this suspension agreement. What the Commerce Department should be doing in these contexts is described as to reduce and eliminate this mandatory price fixing, eliminate these barriers to trade, and put U.S. consumers as the first priority.

I will point out that it is not only Americans as consumers who are harmed by this, but it is also Americans as workers. There are industries that use sugar as a component in their food products. My State of Pennsylvania, in particular, has a lot of these companies—200 confectioners. We have the most in any State. Our sugar-using industries employ nearly 40,000 workers across our Commonwealth. We have 600,000 workers across the country in the various food and beverage industries that make products that we all consume that use sugar. Guess what. Higher sugar prices jeopardize those well-paying food manufacturing jobs. About 120,000 such jobs have been lost over the last 2 decades because what happens is that American food producers just can't compete. American food producers are forced to buy artificially expensive sugar. Their foreign competitors don't have to do that. Their foreign competitors can buy sugar on the world market at about half the price. So guess what? An American candy maker or cereal maker or other food maker is at a huge competitive disadvantage. We have been losing them, in part, because we force them to pay these artificially high prices.

Our own Commerce Department—the very same Commerce Department that negotiated this deal—did a study. This is their work, not mine. They estimate that when you artificially prop up the price of sugar, you might save some jobs in the sugar-growing industry, but for every job you save there, you lose three jobs in the food processing and manufacturing industry—in the sugar consumption industry. What a terrible trade. What a terrible arrangement.

I am very disappointed to learn about this. The Commerce Department clearly failed to negotiate an agreement that would put consumers first and consumers' pocketbooks first. Instead, we have increased prices above the already artificially high levels. We have restrictions on sugar trade, and, apparently, we have decided to pursue protectionist policies that advance the interests of a small handful of wealthy growers at the expense of several hundred million American consumers. This strikes me as crony capitalism, and it is a huge mistake.

I hope that this is not a sign of what is to come in trade negotiations. We are told that the administration is going to be reevaluating and renegotiating various agreements, including NAFTA and others. As they are being reconsidered, I hope we will not go down this protectionist road of favoring a handful of the privileged few at the expense of the many, as we apparently did in this agreement.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, however loud, persistent, and powerful the climate denial operation has been, we have to remember that it has always been built on lies. It is a huge fortress of lies stacked upon lies—lies about the science, lies about the scientists, lies about doubt, lies about costs, lies through phony front groups, and lies about where the money comes from and who is pulling the strings.

This fortress of lies protects a subsidy to the fossil fuel industry that the International Monetary Fund puts at \$700 billion per year. For big, big money, you can do big, big lies, and they do. These have been the biggest lies of our generation. But to paraphrase the great reggae singer Jimmy Cliff: "The bigger you lie, the harder you fall." To paraphrase the "Game of Thrones," "The fall is coming." In the last few weeks, there has been news that has shaken this fortress of lies and moves us toward that fall. Shareholders are rising up.

For as long as there have been shareholder resolutions to fossil fuel companies about climate change, there has been resolute opposition from management to every vote. Hundreds of shareholder resolutions went down to defeat until now.

Occidental Petroleum shareholders last month won the first victory against management, and a week later mighty ExxonMobil was defeated by its shareholders. This new reporting that shareholders have demanded will help clear away the lies. The fall is coming.

There are even lies within the lies. To fend off this latest shareholder resolution to try to make the company look less irresponsible, ExxonMobil's CEO repeated the company's claim that it knows climate change is real and supports a carbon fee—but it doesn't.

As everyone in this building knows, ExxonMobil maintains a massive lobbying apparatus in Washington, and that massive apparatus is and always has been resolutely opposed to any such thing as a carbon fee or any serious climate action whatsoever, for that matter, unless maybe ExxonMobil doesn't know what its own vast lobbying apparatus is doing. Maybe ExxonMobil spends that enormous amount of money to exert its influence in Washington to stop any climate action, and the CEO is unaware of that going on. I doubt that. You be the judge of whether that is credible.

It is not just shareholders rising up; attorneys general are starting to win. The attorney general of New York has just filed pleadings in State court in New York asserting that ExxonMobil's

climate reporting has been a "sham"—to use the word from his filing; that, in the oldest of accounting tricks, ExxonMobil kept two sets of books assessing carbon pollution risk. After fierce opposition by ExxonMobil lawyers using every trick in the book to delay and snarl the New York attorney general, it looks now as if ExxonMobil may have lied to its investors and its shareholders. If ExxonMobil has lied to its shareholders, that is a violation of law, and that fall comes hard indeed.

Secretary of State Tillerson evidently knew of and approved the two sets of carbon pollution books when he was CEO of ExxonMobil. We will see where this goes, but of all the people around Trump who might be indicted, now we might add the Secretary of State.

The Attorney General of Massachusetts is also pursuing ExxonMobil against equally fierce tactics by ExxonMobil lawyers. To try to get away from the Massachusetts attorney general, the lawyers even went so far as to claim—get this—that ExxonMobil was not doing business in Massachusetts; that it didn't have the minimum contacts with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts necessary for the State even to assert jurisdiction. Well, the judge virtually laughed that argument out of court, but it shows how desperate ExxonMobil must be feeling as it tries to wriggle away from having to answer questions under oath.

Nothing turns a big lie into a hard fall better than having to put that right hand up and give truthful testimony and face cross-examination under penalty of perjury.

Will the Securities and Exchange Commission take a look at this sham reporting, too, or has the Federal government, under Trump, degenerated into such a fossil fuel banana republic that no Federal agency will do its job against that industry or might it even chime in on the side of industry Pruitt-style?

Do you remember the question of whether the fossil fuel climate denial operation merits investigation under Federal civil racketeering laws? The tobacco industry was sued under Federal civil racketeering laws by the U.S. Department of Justice so there is a model. You may remember that the question as to the fossil fuel climate denial operation was referred by Attorney General Lynch to the FBI—or so she testified.

One wonders, did the FBI ever take an honest look? What was the outcome? Was there ever a report? Are they still looking at it?

Remember that the Department of Justice won its civil racketeering case against the tobacco industry, they won it at trial, and they won again on appeal. The woman who won that case for the Department of Justice, the lead trial attorney for the Department, has said publicly that this climate denial operation also merits investigation as fraud. That would seem to be a knowledgeable opinion from the woman who

won the last case, an opinion perhaps worth heeding, but did anything happen? Will anything happen?

Forget too big to fail or too big to jail. Is the power of the fossil fuel industry now so great that it is too big even to investigate, even by the Department of Justice? Does it now take State attorneys general to do the job because the Federal government is so owned now by the fossil fuel industry?

Think about it. What if the FBI reported to the Attorney General that there was a meritorious fraud case arising out of all the lies propping up climate denial? Who believes Attorney General Sessions would allow that case to go forward against his party's biggest backer?

Well, the bigger the lie, ultimately, the harder the fall. One way or the other, this fact remains constant and true. There always will come a day of reckoning. With these shareholder victories and with these attorneys general victories, that day of reckoning is closing in—the day when they have to put that right hand up and testify truthfully and under oath, not just send out spin through front groups and operatives but testify truthfully under penalty of perjury.

It is long overdue for truth to have its day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

AMENDMENT NO. 232, AS MODIFIED

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the Crapo-Brown-Corker-Cardin Countering Russian Aggression and Cyber Attacks Act of 2017. This bill, filed as an amendment, was filed as amendment No. 232 to the Iran sanctions bill late last night.

Yesterday, the Senate Banking and Foreign Relations Committees concluded their work on a groundbreaking piece of legislation regarding Russia sanctions. I say groundbreaking because the legislation not only ratchets up pressure against the Russian Federation for its illegal invasion and annexation of Crimea, continuing escalation of violence in eastern Ukraine, and its cyber activities against businesses and citizens of the United States, but it also, importantly, provides Congress with a strong oversight process over almost any termination or suspension of these sanctions.

Senators CORKER, BROWN, CARDIN, and their staffs spent many hours to ensure that we put together a thoughtful and measured product, and I thank them for their work.

Senator BROWN and I have worked together for months to try to craft a responsible Russia sanctions package, and Senator CORKER has been a tireless champion of this measure as has Senator CARDIN. I also would be remiss if I did not recognize the work of Senators MCCAIN, BROWN, SHAHEEN, and the many others who have worked to develop much of what has ended up in this legislation. All of us appreciate the leadership of Majority Leader

McCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER, who worked with us as we came to our final agreement.

The need for this legislation was underlined by the fact that many Americans have deep concerns about Russia's behavior over the past few years. Since coming to power, Russian President Putin has become increasingly belligerent, nationalistic, and autocratic.

Currently, the United States has imposed sanctions on Russia for Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea and its role in supporting the separatist movements in eastern Ukraine, Russia's increasing cyber attacks and cyber espionage against the United States, Russia's support for the Assad regime in Syria, and Russia's complicity for corruption.

Although this is not an exhaustive list, it demonstrates the lengths to which Russia will go to seize power and influence in the international arena.

Unfortunately, Putin's desire to increase Russia's political influence is not driven by a desire to raise the standard of living for Russians. Instead, it is driven by a craving to enrich and empower himself and his cronies.

Over the course of the past 3 months, the Senate Banking Committee has held hearings assessing the impacts of the current sanctions regime against Russia. We examined the existing Russian sanctions architecture in terms of its effectiveness and its economic impact. The Russians have largely learned to live within the economic confines of the existing sanctions regime.

In Putin's calculation, the cost of the sanctions do not outweigh the benefits of occupying Crimea and contributing to unrest in Ukraine, to continuing to support the Assad regime's assault on civilians in Syria, and conducting cyber attacks on people, companies, and institutions around the globe.

Many of us on both sides of the aisle feel the United States needs to be much stronger in its response. Americans want to see the United States stand firm in the defense of our long-held values, which include respect for territorial integrity, human rights, and liberty.

At this point, the only way to change Putin's cost-benefit analysis is to increase the pressure which we apply directly through sanctions.

The Crapo-Brown-Corker-Cardin amendment is an effective way to increase the pressure on Russia for its irresponsible conduct. Our legislation signals to the world the unflinching commitment of the United States to the sanctity of territorial integrity, human rights, and good governance. Our amendment also demonstrates our resolve in responding to cyber attacks against U.S. citizens and entities and against our allies.

In summary, the Crapo-Brown-Corker-Cardin amendment does four things: It escalates and expands the current sanctions regime against Rus-

sia; it creates new sanctions against Russia; it engages Congress at a higher level than before by providing a mechanism for Congress to vote before lifting any sanctions on Russia; and it increases the Treasury Department's ability to track illicit finance, including illicit flows linked to Russia.

We escalate and expand the current sanctions regime against Russia by codifying and modifying six current Executive orders. Four of these orders relate to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and two relate to Russia's malicious cyber activity.

We expand the sanctions under the Ukraine-related Executive orders to reach Russian deep-water, Arctic, and shale projects worldwide. We also permit the President to apply these sanctions to Russian railway, shipping, and metals and mining sectors.

The amendment also creates several new sanctions against Russia. There are new sanctions for those who are engaged in significant activities undermining cyber security. These sanctions also apply to those providing material support for such malicious cyber actors.

We also impose mandatory sanctions on entities engaged in special Russian energy projects and on foreign financial institutions facilitating transactions in response to Russia's continued aggression in Ukraine.

The amendment includes tough sanctions on Russian Government officials, their relatives, and close associates responsible for significant corruption in Russia or elsewhere.

It sanctions people who help others evade sanctions and people responsible for human rights violations in any territory controlled by Russia.

Additionally, it sanctions those who work for or on behalf of the Russian defense and intelligence sectors, those who invest or support the construction of Russian energy export pipelines, and corrupt government officials who enrich themselves after making deals to privatize state-owned assets.

Finally, it sanctions those who help the Assad regime acquire chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons technology, ballistic or cruise missile capabilities, or destabilizing numbers and types of advanced conventional weapons.

The Crapo-Brown-Corker-Cardin amendment will result in some very powerful new sanctions on Russia. Part of our agreement includes congressional review language to ensure Congress exerts proper oversight on the use of these powerful sanctions. We require the President to notify Congress when imposing certain types of sanctions, and we will have the opportunity to review any attempts to lift sanctions with regard to Russia. We intend to use this review model on all sanctions regimes moving forward, and I intend to work to apply it to sanctions on Iran.

Amendment No. 232 is more than just the sanctions and congressional review;

this legislation also includes important counterterrorism financing provisions adopted by the House and Senate during the 114th Congress. It requires the creation of a national strategy for combatting the financing of terrorism and related forms of illicit finance. This strategy ensures that the United States pursues a coordinated and effective fight against illicit finance at all levels of the Russian Government.

Our measure requires the strategy to enhance public-private partnerships to prevent and detect illicit finance. The measure also requires the Treasury Department to report on its efforts to identify illicit finance flows linked to Russia affecting the U.S. financial system or the financial system of our allies. We must engage all of our allies, particularly our trading partners, to work with us so that we achieve our objectives without collateral damage, which is so often the case. It is important that our trading partners be with us on this issue rather than being the victims of the actions we take.

This is a strong bipartisan measure that in important respects represents the next step forward. Of course, this will not be the last step if Russia does not begin to demonstrate verifiable steps toward reducing its course of aggression on multiple fronts. Make no mistake—the sanctions currently in place and those submitted in our amendment last night are Putin's fault and not a result of Putin's confused notions of Russian power and pride.

Even though unilateral actions are not the best option, America must lead on this issue and encourage others to follow since the most successful sanctions result from a united front of United States and European Union cooperation.

Since the unlawful annexation of Crimea, the years of destabilizing eastern Ukraine through relentless war, the global spread of cyber intrusions, and Putin's indefensible support of Assad's leadership of Syria, particularly in light of its recent chemical attack, fewer are left in Europe to defend Putin's policies. The times call for clarity of purpose and a correct amount of pressure. We have that in this amendment.

Again, thank you to Senators CORKER, BROWN, and CARDIN for your hard work and support and to each of the other Senators from both sides of the aisle who have worked to help develop and pursue the policies adopted in this legislation. Thank you to Leader MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER for all of your help and support.

I look forward to passing this measure in short order, and I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bipartisan amendment.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, today, I speak in favor of the Iran sanctions bill. I am an original cosponsor of the bill, so it should come as no surprise that I support it. My only concern is that we did not pass it sooner.

As I stand here today, I cannot help but feel that this moment highlights the folly of the last 8 years of President Obama's foreign policy. For 8 years, President Obama did everything he could to curry favor with the Ayatollahs in Tehran. He ignored popular protests, known as the Green Movement, and the thousands of Iranians who cried out for something more than sham elections. He lectured our Gulf Arab allies on the need to "share" the Middle East with their sworn enemy in some kind of cold peace. He insisted on putting daylight between us and our friend Israel. He dallied and dithered as the regime helped its client Bashar al-Assad help tear apart his own country in a brutal civil war. Most infamously, he traded away billions of dollars in sanctions relief for a flimsy, one-sided nuclear deal—a deal that did not prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon so much as ultimately guarantee it in just a few years.

What do we have to show for all of this? What did we get for looking the other way for 8 years? Not a more reasonable Iran, not a more open, tolerant, democratic Iran, not a friendlier Iran, but an emboldened Iran—one that continues to launch ballistic missiles in willful defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions. For everything we have done to mollify the ayatollahs and their sensitivities, they have gone out of their way to inflame ours. What did President Obama do? Nothing but appease them.

But we should not lay these failures solely on the last President's doorstep, because he represents a mindset that is too widely shared. It is one that sees Iran's obvious imperial aggression in the Middle East and yet still considers America the aggressor. It is one that tries to compartmentalize and haggle with a regime whose leaders shout "death to Israel" and "death to America" virtually every Friday. It is one that refuses to call a spade a spade and say to the Ayatollahs that enough is enough.

But today we are changing course—and not a moment too soon. This legislation will finally hold the regime and Tehran accountable for their brazen attempts to bully their neighbors and assert supremacy throughout the Middle East. It will put heavy sanctions on anyone who is involved in helping Iran develop ballistic missiles, circumvent our arms embargo, or spread terrorism throughout the world.

I know there are those who consider this kind of a move to be provocative, but I would say that it is the Iranian

regime's aggression that has been provocative. All of these sanctioned activities are things that the regime and Tehran should not be doing in the first place. I do not think it is provocative to hold our enemies to the same standards as our friends. I do not think it is unreasonable to do what we can to protect our friends and ourselves from Iranian-supported terrorism and from a regime that is responsible for killing hundreds of American troops in the Middle East. Instead, I think it is long overdue.

Today, I am glad to see the Senate finally prepared to rectify these grave mistakes.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REAUTHORIZING THE NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the bipartisan legislation that will reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program. I wish to speak a little bit about flood insurance first before I talk about our much needed legislation.

As most people know—but unfortunately some folks don't know or maybe they forget—if you have homeowners insurance on your home and you have a flood, you are not covered. Homeowners insurance does not cover flooding. In order to be covered for flooding, you have to have a separate policy, and about the only place you can go to get flood insurance is from the Federal program—the National Flood Insurance Program. Now, that is a bit of an overstatement. It is possible to buy flood insurance from a private insurer—and certainly we want to encourage private insurers to participate more in the flood insurance market—but today, for the most part, if you want to carry flood insurance, you have to get it through the Federal program, and that is called the National Flood Insurance Program. It is administered by FEMA.

It is hard to overstate the importance of flood insurance to the American people. It is even harder to overstate the importance of flood insurance to the people of Louisiana. The gross domestic product in my State is about \$220 billion to \$230 billion a year. If you add up all the goods and services that we as Louisianians produce every year, it comes out to between \$220 billion and \$230 billion. Without flood insurance, you can cut that figure in half. We would have to, in effect, turn out the lights.

There are 450,000 flood insurance policies in my State. Many of those people have to have flood insurance; it is a condition of their mortgage. So the

Flood insurance program and, more specifically, the National Flood Insurance Program, is extraordinarily important to America, but it is even more extraordinarily important to the people of Louisiana.

We are introducing a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program. The current program expires in September. If we don't reauthorize it, most Americans who have flood insurance at the present time will no longer be able to access it. It is critical that the U.S. Congress act and act immediately.

The bill we are introducing—and I will explain in a moment whom I mean by “we”—is bipartisan legislation.

Now, there are a lot of issues that divide Congress today, and reasonable people are entitled to disagree over some of these very difficult issues, but there are also issues we can come together on, and I respectfully suggest that flood insurance is one of them.

We have put together a bipartisan coalition, including Senator BOB MENENDEZ from New Jersey, who happens to be a Democrat; and Senator CORY BOOKER from New Jersey, who happens to be a Democrat; Senator THAD COCHRAN, chairman of our Appropriations Committee in the Senate, from Mississippi, who is a Republican; Senator MARCO RUBIO from Florida, who is a Republican; Senator BILL NELSON from Florida, who is a Democrat; Senator VAN HOLLEN from Maryland, who happens to be a Democrat; and more Senators are coming on board.

We are introducing a bill called the SAFE National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act. SAFE, of course, is an acronym. It refers to sustainable, affordable, fair, and efficient—SAFE—the SAFE National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act.

Let me briefly tell my colleagues what it does. I will start with cost. It doesn't do a bit of good to offer someone insurance if they can't afford it, and too many times that has been the case with flood insurance. Right now, under the current program, the National Flood Insurance Program is allowed to raise a homeowner's flood insurance premium by 18 percent—not 10 percent, not 12 percent but by a staggering 18 percent—and to do that every year. If you are insuring a second home—let's suppose you have a vacation home—or if you are a businesswoman or a businessman and insuring a commercial establishment, the national program can raise your premiums every year by 25 percent. Nobody can pay those kinds of increases.

No. 1, our bill would cap the amount the Flood Insurance Program can raise someone's premium at 10 percent annually. I wish we could tap it at zero percent annually, but 10 percent is certainly a lot better for our people than 18 percent and 25 percent, respectively. If FEMA properly implements some other provisions of our act, which I will talk about in a moment, there will not be any increases.

No. 2, our bill, the SAFE National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act, would extend the National Flood Insurance Program by 6 years. I wish we could extend it longer. I wish we could do 10 years or 15 years or 20 years, but it is necessary for us, as the Presiding Officer knows, to get unified, bipartisan support on this legislation, and we think 6 years—a 6-year authorization is probably the best we can do to pass this bill.

No. 3, our bill will save about \$750 million a year. Let me say that again. Our bill will save about \$750 million each and every year to be used in the Flood Insurance Program. Here is how our legislation would do it.

First, as we know, the Flood Insurance Program has a deficit. We have had a large number of natural disasters, including floods, over the past several years in our country, unfortunately. We had Hurricane Sandy. We had Hurricane Katrina. In my State in Louisiana, last year we had two horrible floods, both in the northern part of my State and in the southern part of my State. In a couple of instances, we had 23 inches of rain in 2 days. I don't care if you live on Mount Everest, if you get 23 inches of rain in 2 days, you are going to flood. Those floods were very expensive.

Those catastrophes and many others caused the National Flood Insurance Program to operate at a deficit. The deficit is \$25 billion. Another way of stating that is, the program owes \$25 billion in debt, but we owe it to ourselves. We don't owe it to a bank, we don't owe it to a foreign country, we don't owe it to any private entity; we owe it to ourselves, and we have been paying interest to ourselves out of the premiums—the cashflow, if you will—of the Flood Insurance Program every year. That 10 percent—10 cents out of every dollar that comes into the National Flood Insurance Program—is devoted to just paying the interest on this debt that we owe ourselves.

Our bill would suspend those interest payments for 6 years. That will free up about \$400 million a year.

We are also saving money by asking those who work with us in implementing the National Flood Insurance Program to sharpen their pencils. Let me explain what I mean by that. FEMA is in charge of the National Flood Insurance Program, but FEMA doesn't run the program. It doesn't run the insurance company that administers the policies. FEMA hires private insurers in the private sector to actually run the program. We call that the “write your own” program.

For the most part, those private insurers that administer the program do a good job, but they don't have any risk. They have zero risk, none, nada. The risk is on the National Flood Insurance Program—the Federal government—and therefore the American taxpayer. We just hire the private insurers to administer the program—to collect the premiums, to sell the policies, to

adjust the claims. So they have no risk. Yet we are paying them 31 cents out of every dollar that the program would take in.

Our bill respectfully suggests that is too much money. While we appreciate the cooperation we get and the good work we get from the private insurers who help us administer this program, we are going to ask them—actually, we are going to tell them—to reduce their compensation from 31 cents out of every dollar. That is going to save about \$350 million a year. So we just saved about \$750 million a year for the National Flood Insurance Program.

What are we going to do with the money? First, mitigation. With flooding—and it is inevitable that we are going to have floods. I don't know why bad things happen to good people, but they do. You can pay a little bit up front or you can pay a whole lot later, and this is what I mean by that.

If we spend the money on mitigation to protect against the flooding that we know will inevitably happen, we will save money for the American taxpayer in the long run, and we will use a portion of that \$750 million in savings to mitigate against flood risk. By mitigation, I mean offering low- or no-interest loans to homeowners to elevate their homes so they will not flood—building levees, building flood walls. Our bill does not say specifically what mitigation measures should be taken, and it does not say which mitigation projects will be built, but it does say that mitigation is the answer, not the complete answer but part of the answer. We haven't done enough of it. Now we are going to have the resources to do it.

The second way we are going to use that money is to try to do a better job with maps. We set rates in the National Flood Insurance Program based on the likelihood that someone will be flooded. We determine that likelihood by using maps drawn by experts using computer models. We are not using the most up-to-date, state-of-the-art technology to draw those maps, but if our bill passes, we will, including but not limited to a new technology called LIDAR. I confess, I don't understand the technology, but it is called LIDAR, Light Detection and Ranging technology. It can be used to draw more accurate flood maps to more accurately assess someone's propensity to flood.

Why is that important? You might be in a high-risk flood zone right now and paying a large premium. With state-of-the-art technology, you may be put into a lower risk flood zone and pay less. I am not guaranteeing that result, but it is certainly possible. In any event, we need to as accurately as possible assess the risk, and the only way to do that is through proper mapping.

Our bill would also include a provision that will allow Congress to provide better and greater oversight of FEMA in administering the program. Let me say specifically what it will do.

The very able Administrator at FEMA who handles the Flood Insurance Program testified before the Banking Committee a few months ago that if one of these private insurance companies that administers the Flood Insurance Program for us has lawyers or consultants who are not doing their jobs, FEMA doesn't have the authority to fire them. This bill will give FEMA the authority to fire those consultants, and here is why this is important: Most of the lawyers, engineers, and other consultants private insurance companies hire to help them administer the program on behalf of the National Flood Insurance Program do a pretty good job, but some of them do not. There have been recorded instances both in New Jersey and in Louisiana where certain people, engineers and lawyers, have seen it as their mission to do anything they possibly can to keep a homeowner who has paid his or her hard-earned money to buy insurance from getting the money they deserve if they flood, and that is just wrong.

If you are trying to defraud the National Flood Insurance Program, we need to fight you like a tiger. But if you have paid your premiums and, unfortunately, you have flooded, you are entitled to get your money. You should not be required to fight some engineer or some lawyer who is throwing up obstacle after obstacle after obstacle. Our bill says that if there are consultants who do that and the private insurance companies don't want to fire them, then, by God, FEMA will, and we are going to hold FEMA accountable.

A couple more points I will mention: This bill will also extend coverage limits. Right now, the most flood insurance a homeowner can buy is \$250,000. While that is a lot of money, that doesn't cover some homes, given the rate of inflation in America today, and our bill would expand coverage limits to \$500,000 for homes and \$1.5 million for commercial establishments.

I have talked to some of my colleagues in the Senate and in the House, and some of them, whom I am happy for, represent States that haven't had any major floods, and I hope they never do. But if we have learned anything in the last few years in terms of flooding, we have learned that just when men and women think they can control everything in this world and can control their destiny, they can't control God and Mother Nature. Flooding can happen at any time.

Let me say it again. You can live in a mountain State. You can live on top of a mountain. But if you get 23 inches of rain in 2 days, you are going to flood, and that is why you need flood insurance. That is why this bill is not just important to coastal States like Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, New Jersey, and Maryland; it is important to all Americans.

This is a bipartisan bill. Have I mentioned that? I think I did. This is a bipartisan bill. It is supported by many

Democrats. It is supported by many Republicans. It is a bill that is not only important for our economy, but it is important for the peace of mind of the American people. I hope we will not let politics get in the way of doing what we know to be right.

Once again, the bill is called the SAFE—which stands for Sustainable, Affordable, Fair, and Efficient—National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act. I hope this body will come together as one and support this much needed legislation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

HONORING LIEUTENANT PATRICK WEATHERFORD

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay respect to a law enforcement officer in my home State of Arkansas who lost his life in the line of duty yesterday, Monday, June 12, 2017.

Lieutenant Patrick Weatherford of the Newport Police Department joined other officers in responding to the call of a vehicle break-in when he was shot. Sadly, Lieutenant Weatherford passed away later that evening.

Lieutenant Weatherford served on the Newport police force for 15 years and recently graduated from the FBI Academy. He was also a graduate of ASU-Newport and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Lieutenant Weatherford was recognized as the 2016 Jackson County Officer of the Year by Arkansas attorney general Leslie Rutledge.

His colleagues had great respect and admiration for him, and he was known as an officer who performed his duties with professionalism and skill.

This is the second Arkansas law enforcement officer we have lost in 2017. Any occasion when someone who is sworn to protect and serve their community does not return home to the loved ones waiting for them is incredibly sad and heartbreaking. Arkansans value the men and women who volunteer to help ensure and enhance public safety knowing the risks involved.

We are devastated by the loss of another law enforcement officer in our State, and we thank all of those who sacrifice so much to protect us.

I want to encourage my colleagues to pass the Honoring Hometown Heroes Act to allow Governors to order the American flag to fly at half-staff in recognition of the sacrifice of first responders like Lieutenant Weatherford who make the ultimate sacrifice.

My thoughts and prayers go out to Lieutenant Weatherford's family and friends, as well as the community he served, which will no doubt miss him dearly. I pray they will all find comfort during such a difficult time as this.

I also stand with all Arkansans in expressing our gratitude for Lieutenant Weatherford's service and commit to honoring the sacrifice he and others have made to protect us.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the committee substitute amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

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 the committee-reported substitute amendment to Calendar No. 110, S. 722, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Crapo, Mike Rounds, Tom Cotton, Bob Corker, Steve Daines, John Barrasso, Rob Portman, Jeff Flake, Dan Sullivan, John Hoeven, James M. Inhofe, John Cornyn, John Thune, Cory Gardner, Ron Johnson.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the underlying bill, S. 722.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

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 Calendar No. 110, S. 722, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Mike Crapo, Jeff Flake, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, Tom Cotton, Bob Corker, Steve Daines, Dan Sullivan, John Hoeven, James M. Inhofe, John Cornyn, John Thune, Cory Gardner, John Barrasso, Ron Johnson, Rob Portman.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls with respect to the cloture motions be waived.

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

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.

TRIBUTE TO CAROLYN LERNER AND MARK COHEN

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the service of Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner. Ms. Lerner's term as the leader of the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, OSC, has expired. By many accounts, she has been the most successful leader of that office in the agency's 40 year history.

This office has a critical mission, one that is more important now than ever. It protects government whistleblowers and helps to eliminate government waste, fraud, and abuse. It is also responsible for the enforcement of the Hatch Act, which keeps the Federal workplace free from improper partisan politics.

Special Counsel Lerner was confirmed unanimously by the Senate in June 2011. During her tenure, she restored the integrity of the Office of Special Counsel after a difficult period. Moreover, she reestablished the OSC as a safe and effective office to defend government whistleblowers.

Moreover, I would also like to recognize the exemplary service of her principal deputy, Mark Cohen, who is leaving government service as well. The OSC played a critical role in protecting hundreds of whistleblowers at the Department of Veterans Affairs. They worked with these courageous employees to improve care for veterans at hospitals across the country, including efforts to improve conditions for veterans in the Baltimore VA.

Under Ms. Lerner and Mr. Cohen's leadership, the OSC worked with Homeland Security whistleblowers to end an improper overtime program, saving the taxpayers \$100 million a year according to the Congressional Budget Office.

These and many, many other victories for whistleblowers and taxpayers set a new standard in terms of effectiveness for this important office.

As my colleague and friend from Maryland, Congressman CUMMINGS, stated in a recent Washington Post article, "Ms. Lerner turned the Office of Special Counsel 'into a model agency and set the bar as the head of that office.'" I ask unanimous consent to have this article printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

As Senator GRASSLEY, a longtime champion of government whistleblowers, stated in the same article, "Her leadership should be a road map for future leaders of this office."

Given the office's important good government role, the OSC enjoyed broad, bipartisan support under Lerner

and Cohen's leadership. I concur with my colleagues and encourage the next leaders of that office to follow their lead as I pay tribute to their government service.

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

[From the Washington Post, June 7, 2017]

SPECIAL COUNSEL LERNER LEAVES OFFICE AS TRUMP REJECTS HIGHLY PRAISED WHISTLEBLOWER ADVOCATE

(By Joe Davidson)

The defining moment for the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) after Carolyn Lerner became head of the agency was a gruesome one about body parts and a dismembered Marine.

It's not the usual fare for the office on M Street NW that deals with Hatch Act violations and prohibited personnel practices. But protecting whistleblowers is where OSC makes its reputation—as in the 2011 case involving the Defense Department's Port Mortuary in Dover, Del.

Soon this little but powerful office will have a new special counsel. Rejecting the advice of Republicans and Democrats to keep Lerner, President Trump has nominated Henry Kerner to take her place. He is a former Republican congressional staffer and currently assistant vice president at the Cause of Action Institute, a small-government advocacy organization.

Lerner, who leaves office on June 14, had been on the job only a few months when she revealed reports by federal employees of grisly transgressions at the morgue operated by the Air Force. Body parts were lost in two cases, and in another, the office reported that the mangled body of a Marine "was dismembered with a saw in order to make the body fit inside a military uniform, without the consent or notification of the family."

With a staff that wouldn't begin to fill one Pentagon hallway, Lerner humbled and embarrassed the Defense Department, the government's largest agency. Lawmakers were appalled. The Air Force secretary at the time expressed his sincere "regret" for "lapses in our standards at Dover," a non-apologetic understatement.

The action of the Office of Special Counsel—no relation to a special prosecutor or to Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel investigating Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election—secured mortuary reforms and protected the employees who were targets of Air Force retaliation.

"I think that we have sent the federal community a message that whistleblowers should be valued," Lerner said Monday in her office overlooking St. Matthew's Cathedral. "Whistleblowers now feel comfortable coming forward, and that is helping our government."

The Port Mortuary case "really helped the federal community understand that OSC was robust enforcer of whistleblower laws," she added.

Considering the widespread retaliation against federal whistleblowers, her assessment of their comfort might be optimistic, but there is no doubt that the Office of Special Counsel is a more robust agency than the moribund place they found before she got there.

It moved "from last-resort option to first choice for getting relief for whistleblowers," said Tom Devine, legal director of the Government Accountability Project, a whistleblower advocacy organization.

Relief for individual whistleblowers also can mean systemic improvements for federal agencies and taxpayers. The Department of Veterans Affairs is the obvious example.

Congress approved VA improvements following a 2014 scandal over the coverup of long patient wait times, which was revealed by whistleblowers. Whistleblower disclosures also led to a new overtime pay system for Border Patrol agents. Lerner's office was instrumental in both.

Devine's strong praise for OSC is not unqualified. "The bad news is they operate at a molasses pace" in some instances, he said. He added that he would like Lerner to be more aggressive about taking legal action against federal agencies that violate whistleblower rights.

Despite the slow pace, agency statistics show impressive gains. There were "276 favorable actions for whistleblowers and other victims of PPPs [prohibited personnel practices] this past year, more than double the annual average," the office said in its budget justification to Congress. "In the last two years, OSC has achieved five times the number of favorable actions in whistleblower retaliation complaints than in any prior two-year period in agency history. . . . In FY 2016, for the second straight year, OSC received upwards of 6,000 new matters, a 25 percent increase over the prior two-year period."

The increased caseload leads to bigger backlogs, but it also demonstrates that employees are more willing to trust the office with sensitive cases.

Ironical criticism comes from James J. Wilson, the agency's chief human capital officer. He filed a whistleblower retaliation complaint against Lerner with the Merit Systems Protection Board after failing to find success before the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Regarding his complaints to the council, Wilson, who previously filed grievances against former employers at two other agencies, signed an affidavit saying, "I received final decisions closing these four matters with no further action being taken."

Whatever the criticism of Lerner, it is outweighed by praise from whistleblowers and Members of Congress.

"She's fearless," Robert MacLean, an air marshal whistleblower, told me earlier this year. His was the first federal whistleblower case heard by the Supreme Court and MacLean credits his victory largely to work done by OSC.

Unusual in this era of hyper-polarization, she is lauded by both sides of the aisle.

"Leading the Office of Special Counsel requires a deep appreciation for the patriotic work that whistleblowers do to shine a light on fraud or misconduct in government. Carolyn Lerner has been a steadfast advocate for government whistleblowers, and I am grateful for her service at OSC," said Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. "Her leadership should be a road map for future leaders of this office."

The Senate Whistleblower Protection Caucus, founded by Grassley and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), had urged the Trump administration to retain Lerner.

"I am disappointed the president chose not to take Sen. Grassley's and my recommendation to renominate Carolyn Lerner, who is an experienced leader with bipartisan support," said Wyden.

It's also bicameral. Before Trump's decision, Rep. Rod Blum (Iowa), Republican chairman of the House Whistleblower Protection Caucus, led a bipartisan House letter saying Lerner deserved another term. Among those who signed was Rep. Elijah Cummings (Md.), the ranking Democrat on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

Lerner turned the Office of Special Counsel "into a model agency and set the bar as the

head of that office," Cummings said by email Monday. "She served with independence and tenacity to hold agency officials accountable when they retaliated against whistleblowers."

TRIBUTE TO BETSY HUMPHREYS

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, as a Member of the Senate who supports efforts to build support for biomedical research and improved public health, I would like to pay tribute to a great public servant and the first woman and first librarian to lead the National Library of Medicine, NLM, the world's largest biomedical library and a part of the National Institutes of Health. Ms. Humphreys recently announced that she will retire at the end of June after 44 years of extraordinary leadership and distinguished public service.

On May 9, the board of regents of the National Library of Medicine approved and presented the following resolution to congratulate, commend, and thank Betsy Humphreys for her 44 years of service to the NLM. I would like to share that resolution with my colleagues and join the NLM board of regents in paying tribute to Betsy Humphreys, a public servant who has had a profound and lasting impact on the NLM, the United States, and the global community.

I ask unanimous consent to have the text of the resolution printed in the RECORD.

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

Ms. Betsy L. Humphreys has served NLM, the United States, and the global community with distinction since 1973, culminating in her appointment as the NLM Deputy Director in 2005, a post she continues to occupy today, and serving as NLM Acting Director from April 1, 2015 to August 14, 2016—the first woman and first librarian to lead the Library.

In a career that could be called one long highlight reel, she directed the groundbreaking Unified Medical Language System project, which produces knowledge sources to support advanced processing, retrieval, and integration of information from disparate electronic information sources, and which is used around the world. In the process, she developed unique knowledge and experience with the content and format of many biomedical terminologies, health vocabularies, and clinical classifications that would serve her well in all endeavors to follow.

She was a key contributor to interagency efforts to advance standardization of electronic health data, which resulted in the development, promotion, and implementation of mechanisms for designating US standards for health data exchange. She was also a major contributor to the Federal regulation setting the standards for use in electronic interchange of administrative health data.

Taking a broader view, she led US government efforts to remove major barriers to the use of standard clinical terminologies in electronic health records (EHRs). Before there was an Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health Information Technology within HHS, she negotiated the world's first nationwide license for a clinical terminology, SNOMED CT, with usage terms favorable to the US. This became a model for

other countries and was adopted by the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO) when it was formed to put ownership of SNOMED CT in an international entity. She was IHTSDO's founding Chair and has served with distinction as its US member.

With the establishment of the ONC, she led NLM's substantial and ongoing collaboration with that body to develop, support, and disseminate for free US use the key clinical terminologies required for certification of EHR products and use of EHRs by Medicare and Medicaid providers and hospitals. She also directed the development and dissemination of many tools, including mappings, subsets, browsers, etc., and innovative systems, including the NLM Value Set Authority Center and NIH Common Data Element Repository, to support the use of standards in health care, quality measurement, and in research.

She directed the legislatively mandated expansion of ClinicalTrials.gov to encompass registration of additional trials and submission of summary results information. This multi-year, multi-faceted process involved numerous partners and stakeholders, showcasing her ability to grasp and solve complex problems and her considerable skill at consensus building. ClinicalTrials.gov is the largest and most heavily used international clinical trials registry.

She worked tirelessly and creatively to expand and enhance access to research publications, data, and high quality health information for scientists, health professionals, system and product developers, information professionals, and the general public. This often involved building and maintaining strong partnerships across the Federal government to adapt and rebrand strategies to changes in Administrations and priorities and to capitalize on emerging opportunities.

She oversaw the expansion of PubMed Central to include direct deposits of articles from many publishers, manuscript submissions from investigators of publications resulting from NIH-funded research and research funded by other Federal agencies and private funders, including the Gates Foundation, and digitized articles from back issues of biomedical journals, through a partnership with the Wellcome Trust.

She led a collaboration with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to make drug information and device registrations submitted to the FDA by product manufacturers available to the public via NLM's heavily used DailyMed system. In addition, she guided the creation of the AccessGUDID database, which provides public access to registration data for medical devices.

Under her enthusiastic direction, NLM became an early implementer of application programming interfaces and download sites for its many heavily used data and information resources, flinging open the gates and allowing their use by other computer systems and by innovative product developers.

As NLM Acting Director, even in the face of hiring restrictions, she enhanced the quality and efficiency of NLM's high-volume operations, ensured reliable 24/7 availability of electronic information services that are essential to research, health care, and public health worldwide, and advanced major initiatives, including the re-competition of NLM's Informatics Research Training Grants and the re-competition and migration from contracts to cooperative agreement grants of the Regional Medical Libraries in the National Network of Libraries of Medicine.

Throughout her career, in an exemplary fashion, she demonstrated creativity, adaptability, and resilience in partnering with stakeholders inside and outside of NLM. She

leads by fostering employee development, diversity, teamwork, and making optimal use of human, financial, and information resources.

Throughout NLM, she is respected and indeed beloved for her kindness, her resourcefulness, and her can-do spirit. Truly a treasure as a human being and as a public servant, she demonstrated a career-long commitment to interagency collaboration and harnessing government resources for the public good.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Ms. Ridgway, one of his secretaries.

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES

REPORT ON THE CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY THAT WAS ORIGINALLY DECLARED IN EXECUTIVE ORDER 13405 OF JUNE 16, 2006, WITH RESPECT TO BELARUS—PM 9

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs:

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days of the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with that provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine democratic processes or institutions of Belarus that was declared in Executive Order 13405 of June 16, 2006, is to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2017.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine democratic processes or institutions of Belarus, to commit human rights abuses related to political repression, and to engage in public corruption continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13405 with respect to Belarus.

DONALD J. TRUMP.
THE WHITE HOUSE, June 13, 2017.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:27 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by

Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate: ;

H.R. 338. An act to promote a 21st century energy and manufacturing workforce.

H.R. 446. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project.

H.R. 447. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project.

H.R. 627. An act to amend the Energy Policy and Conservation Act to provide for the dissemination of information regarding available Federal programs relating to energy efficiency projects for schools, and for other purposes.

H.R. 951. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project.

H.R. 1109. An act to amend section 203 of the Federal Power Act.

H.R. 2122. An act to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving Jennings Randolph Dam.

H.R. 2274. An act to amend the Federal Power Act to provide for extended periods relating to preliminary permits and commencement of construction, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2292. An act to extend a project of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission involving the Cannonsville Dam.

H.R. 2457. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of certain hydroelectric projects.

At 5:00 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 1094. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

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

H.R. 10. An act to create hope and opportunity for investors, consumers, and entrepreneurs by ending bailouts and Too Big to Fail, holding Washington and Wall Street accountable, eliminating red tape to increase access to capital and credit, and repealing the provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act that make America less prosperous, less stable, and less free, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 338. An act to promote a 21st century energy and manufacturing workforce; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 627. An act to amend the Energy Policy and Conservation Act to provide for the dissemination of information regarding available Federal programs relating to energy efficiency projects for schools, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 1109. An act to amend section 203 of the Federal Power Act; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 2457. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of certain hydroelectric projects; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bills were read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 446. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project.

H.R. 447. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project.

H.R. 951. An act to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project.

H.R. 2122. An act to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving Jennings Randolph Dam.

H.R. 2274. An act to amend the Federal Power Act to provide for extended periods relating to preliminary permits and commencement of construction, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2292. An act to extend a project of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission involving the Cannonsville Dam.

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-1869. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Triclopyr; Pesticide Tolerances for Emergency Exemptions" (FRL No. 9961-29) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-1870. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Pesticides; Certification of Pesticide Applicators Rule; Delay of Effective Date" (FRL No. 9963-34) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-1871. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting the report of twelve (12) officers authorized to wear the insignia of the grade of rear admiral (lower half), in accordance with title 10, United States Code, section 777; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-1872. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency that was declared in Executive Order 13712 of November 22, 2015, with respect to Burundi; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1873. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to the Western Balkans that was declared in Executive Order 13219 of June 26, 2001; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1874. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to North Korea that was declared in Executive Order 13466 of June 26, 2008; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1875. A communication from the Chair of the Board of Governors, Federal Reserve

System, transmitting, pursuant to law, the 103rd Annual Report of the Federal Reserve Board covering operations for calendar year 2016; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1876. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Dedicated-Purpose Pool Pumps" ((RIN1904-AD52) (Docket No. EERE-2015-BT-STD-0008)) received in the Office of the President of Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-1877. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Dedicated-Purpose Pool Pumps" ((RIN1904-AD52) (Docket No. EERE-2015-BT-STD-0008)) received in the Office of the President of Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-1878. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Ceiling Fans" ((RIN1904-AD28) (Docket No. EERE-2012-BT-STD-0045)) received in the Office of the President of Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-1879. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Residential Central Air Conditioners and Heat Pumps" ((RIN1904-AD37) (Docket No. EERE-2014-BT-STD-0048)) received in the Office of the President of Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-1880. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Miscellaneous Refrigeration Products" ((RIN1904-AD51) (Docket No. EERE-2011-BT-STD-0043)) received in the Office of the President of Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-1881. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Ceiling Fans" ((RIN1904-AD28) (Docket No. EERE-2012-BT-STD-0045)) received in the Office of the President of Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-1882. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Miscellaneous Refrigeration Products" ((RIN1904-AD51) (Docket No. EERE-2011-BT-STD-0043)) received in the Office of the President of Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-1883. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of

Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Residential Central Air Conditioners and Heat Pumps” (RIN1904-AD37) (Docket No. EERE-2014-BT-STD-0048) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-1884. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; State of California; Coachella Valley; Attainment Plan for 1997 8-Hour Ozone Standards” (FRL No. 9962-54-Region 9) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1885. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Texas; Revisions to the General Definitions for Texas Air Quality Rules” (FRL No. 9962-23-Region 6) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1886. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; Texas Control of Air Pollution from Motor Vehicles with Mobile Source Incentive Programs” (FRL No. 9962-47-Region 6) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1887. 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; CT; Approval of Single Source Orders; Correction” (FRL No. 9962-83-Region 1) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 2, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1888. 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; Nevada, Lake Tahoe; Second 10-Year Carbon Monoxide Limited Maintenance Plan” (FRL No. 9963-25-Region 9) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 2, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1889. 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 State Plans for Designated Facilities and Pollutants: Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming; Negative Declarations” (FRL No. 9963-21-Region 8) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 2, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1890. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval of California Air Plan Revisions, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District” (FRL No. 9960-07-Region 9) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on

June 2, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1891. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval of Nevada Air Plan Revisions, Clark County Department of Air Quality and Washoe County Health District” (FRL No. 9963-43-Region 9) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 2, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1892. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Approval of Tennessee’s Request to Relax the Federal Reid Vapor Pressure Gasoline Volatility Standard for Davidson,utherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson Counties; and Minor Technical Corrections for Federal Reid Vapor Pressure Gasoline Volatility Standards in Other Areas” (FRL No. 9963-54-OAR) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 2, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1893. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Administrative, Procedural, and Miscellaneous” (Rev. Proc. 2017-38) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 6, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-1894. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Child Welfare Outcomes 2010-2014: Report to Congress”; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-1895. A communication from the Secretary of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department of Labor’s Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period from October 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1896. A communication from the Acting Director of the Peace Corps, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Office of Inspector General’s Semiannual Report for the period of October 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1897. A communication from the Secretary of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department of Education’s Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period from October 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1898. A communication from the Acting Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Semiannual Report of the Inspector General for the period from October 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1899. A communication from the Deputy Archivist of the United States, National Archives and Records Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Presidential Records” (RIN3095-AB87) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 9, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1900. A communication from the Acting Chief Financial Officer, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “U.S. Department of Homeland Security Annual Performance Re-

port for Fiscal Years 2016-2018”; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1901. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Department of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Department of Homeland Security and Department of Labor Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Annual Adjustments for the H-2B Temporary Non-agricultural Worker Program” (RIN1235-AA16 and RIN1615-AC10) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 6, 2017; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1902. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Office of Diversion Control, Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Schedules of Controlled Substances: Placement of Acetyl Fentanyl Into Schedule I” (Docket No. DEA-413) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1903. A communication from the Secretary, Judicial Conference of the United States, transmitting, a report relative to Article III judgeship recommendations and corresponding draft legislation for the 115th Congress; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1904. A communication from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Catcher Vessels Less Than 60 Feet (18.3 Meters) Length Overall Using Hook-and-Line or Pot Gear in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area” (RIN0648-XF204) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 6, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-1905. A communication from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Sablefish in the Bering Sea Subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area” (RIN0648-XF449) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-1906. A communication from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Exchange of Flatfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area” (RIN0648-XF458) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-1907. A communication from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Multispecies Fishery; Trip Limit Increase for the Small Vessel Category of the Common Pool Fishery” (RIN0648-XF313) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-1908. A communication from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Fisheries” (RIN0648-XF413) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-1909. A communication from the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "International Fisheries; Pacific Tuna Fisheries; 2017 and 2018 Commercial Fishing Restrictions for Pacific Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean" (RIN0648-BG41) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-1910. A communication from the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northeast Multispecies Fishery; 2017 and 2018 Sector Operations Plans and 2017 Allocation of Northeast Multispecies Annual Catch Entitlements" (RIN0648-XF138) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-1911. A communication from the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Provisions; Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Northern Red Hake Accountability Measure" (RIN0648-BG63) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-1912. A communication from the Deputy Chief of the Mobility Division, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Review of the Commission's Part 95 Personal Radio Services Rules; Petition for Rulemaking of Garmin International, Incorporated; Petitions for Rulemaking of Omnitronics, Limited Liability Company" ((WT Docket No. 10-119; RM No. 10762; RM No. 10844) (FCC 17-57)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 8, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

The following petitions and memorials were laid before the Senate and were referred or ordered to lie on the table as indicated:

POM-41. A resolution adopted by the Senate of the State of Florida opposing United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 and requesting its repeal or fundamental alteration; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 574

Whereas, the United States has long supported a negotiated settlement leading to a sustainable two-state solution with the democratic, Jewish state of Israel and a demilitarized, democratic Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security; and

Whereas, since 1993, the United States has facilitated direct, bilateral negotiations between both parties toward achieving a two-state solution and ending all outstanding claims; and

Whereas, it is the long-standing policy of the United States that a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will only come through direct, bilateral negotiations between the two parties; and

Whereas, it was the long-standing position of the United States to oppose and, if nec-

essary, veto United Nations Security Council resolutions dictating additional binding parameters on the peace process; and

Whereas, it was also the long-standing position of the United States to oppose and, if necessary, veto one-sided or anti-Israel United Nations Security Council resolutions; and

Whereas, the United States has stood in the minority internationally over successive administrations in defending Israel in international forums, including vetoing one-sided resolutions in 1995, 1997, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, and 2011 before the United Nations Security Council; and

Whereas, the United States recently signed a new memorandum of understanding with the Israeli government regarding security assistance, consistent with long-standing support for Israel among successive administrations and Congresses and representing an important United States commitment toward Israel's qualitative military edge; and

Whereas, on November 29, 2016, the United States House of Representatives unanimously passed House Concurrent Resolution 165, expressing and reaffirming long-standing United States policy in support of a direct, bilaterally negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and in opposition to United Nations Security Council resolutions that impose a solution to the conflict; and

Whereas, on December 23, 2016, the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations disregarded House Concurrent Resolution 165 and departed from long-standing United States policy by abstaining and permitting United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 to be adopted under Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter; and

Whereas, the United States' abstention on United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 contradicts the Oslo Accords and its associated process that is predicated on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict between the parties through direct, bilateral negotiations; and

Whereas, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 claims that "the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace;" and

Whereas, by referring to the "4 June 1967 lines" as the basis for negotiations, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 effectively states that the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem and the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest site, are "occupied territory," thereby equating these sites with outposts in the West Bank which the Israeli government has deemed illegal; and

Whereas, passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 effectively legitimizes efforts by the Palestinian Authority to impose its own solution through international organizations and unjustified boycotts or divestment campaigns against Israel by calling "upon all States, bearing in mind paragraph 1 of this resolution, to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967," and will require the United States and Israel to take effective action to counteract the resolution's potential harmful impacts; and

Whereas, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 did not directly call upon Palestinian leadership to fulfill their obligations toward negotiations or mention that part of the eventual Palestinian state is currently controlled by Hamas, a designated terrorist organization; and

Whereas, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 sought to impose or unduly influence solutions to final-status issues and is biased against Israel: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida,
That the Florida Senate finds that:

(1) The passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 undermined the long-standing position of the United States to oppose and veto United Nations Security Council resolutions that seek to impose solutions to final-status issues or are one-sided and anti-Israel, reversing decades of bipartisan agreement

(2) The passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 undermines the prospect of Israelis and Palestinians resuming productive, direct, bilateral negotiations.

(3) The passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 contributes to the politically motivated acts of boycotting, divesting from, and sanctioning Israel and represents a concerted effort to extract concessions from Israel outside of direct, bilateral negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, which must be actively rejected.

(4) Any future measures taken by any organization, including the United Nations Security Council, to impose an agreement or parameters for an agreement will set back the peace process, harm the security of Israel, contradict the enduring bipartisan consensus on strengthening the United States-Israel relationship, and weaken support for such organizations.

(5) A durable and sustainable peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians is only possible with direct, bilateral negotiations between the parties resulting in a Jewish, democratic state living next to a demilitarized Palestinian state in peace and security.

(6) The United States government should work to facilitate serious, direct, unconditional negotiations between the parties toward a sustainable peace agreement.

(7) The United States government should oppose and veto future one-sided, anti-Israel United Nations Security Council resolutions that seek to impose solutions to final-status issues; and be it further

Resolved, that the Florida Senate opposes and requests the repeal of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 or the fundamental alteration of the resolution so that it:

(1) Is no longer one-sided and anti-Israel.

(2) Authorizes all final-status issues toward a two-state solution to be resolved through direct, bilateral negotiations between the parties involved; and be it further

Resolved, that copies of this resolution be presented to the President of the United States, the President and Secretary of the United States Senate, the Speaker and Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, and the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C., for transmission to the proper authorities of the State of Israel as a tangible token of the sentiments expressed herein.

POM-42. A resolution adopted by the Senate of the State of Florida condemning the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and the increasing incidence of acts of anti-Semitism; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 1184

Whereas, Floridians have, as a matter of public policy, long opposed bigotry, oppression, discrimination; and

Whereas, Florida and Israel have enjoyed a long history of friendship and are great allies, each supporting the best interests of the other; and

Whereas, the State of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, is the greatest

friend and ally of the United States in the region, and

Whereas, the elected representatives of the state recognize the importance of expressing Florida's unwavering support for the Jewish people and the State of Israel's right to exist and right to self-defense, and

Whereas, the incidence of acts of anti-Semitism is increasing throughout the world, including in the United States and in Florida, and is reflected in official hate crime statistics, and

Whereas, the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement is one of the main vehicles for spreading anti-Semitic perspectives and advocating the elimination of the Jewish State, and

Whereas, the level of activities promoting BDS against Israel has increased in this state, in communities and on college campuses, and contributes to the promotion of anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist propaganda, and

Whereas, the increase in BDS campaign activities on college campuses nationwide has resulted in an increase in confrontations with, intimidation of, and discrimination against Jewish students, and

Whereas, leaders of the BDS movement express that their goal is to eliminate Israel as the national home of the Jewish people, and

Whereas, the BDS campaign's call for academic and cultural boycotts has been condemned by many of our nation's largest academic associations, more than 250 university presidents, and many other leading scholars as a violation of the bedrock principle of academic freedom: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida, That the Florida Senate condemns the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against the State of Israel and calls upon the governmental institutions of this state to denounce hatred and discrimination whenever they appear; and be it further

Resolved, that the Florida Senate urges the President of the United States to order withdrawal of the United States Customs and Border Protection statement dated January 23, 2016, entitled "West Bank Country of Origin Marking Requirements," so that goods made in the West Bank can continue to be properly labeled "Made in Israel;" and be it further

Resolved, that copies of this resolution be presented to the President of the United States, the President and Secretary of the United States Senate, and the Speaker and Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, and to the Embassy of Israel in Washington, D.C., for transmission to the proper authorities of the State of Israel as a tangible token of the sentiments expressed herein.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Ms. MURKOWSKI, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 55. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Fort Ontario in the State of New York (Rept. No. 115-104).

By Ms. MURKOWSKI, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, without amendment:

S. 214. A bill to authorize the expansion of an existing hydroelectric project (Rept. No. 115-105).

S. 566. A bill to withdraw certain land in Okanogan County, Washington, to protect the land, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115-106).

S. 714. A bill to amend Public Law 103-434 to authorize Phase III of the Yakima River Basin Water Basin Water Enhancement Project for the purposes of improving water management in the Yakima River basin, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115-107).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

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

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. CASEY, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. ROBERTS):

S. 1343. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code to extend and modify certain charitable tax provisions; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BLUNT (for himself, Mr. REED, Mr. SCOTT, and Mr. MENENDEZ):

S. 1344. A bill to promote the development of local strategies to coordinate use of assistance under sections 8 and 9 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 with public and private resources, to enable eligible families to achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mrs. FISCHER (for herself, Mr. CRAPO, and Mr. BLUNT):

S. 1345. A bill to enhance interstate commerce by creating a national hiring standard for motor carriers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. SULLIVAN):

S. 1346. A bill to amend the Uniform Code of Military Justice to prohibit the non-consensual distribution of private sexual images and to prohibit harassment, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. BENNET, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. MERKLEY, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 1347. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to prevent catastrophic out-of-pocket spending on prescription drugs for seniors and individuals with disabilities; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. CARDIN, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. CARPER, and Mr. COONS):

S. 1348. A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to require drug manufacturers to publicly justify unnecessary price increases; to the Committee on Finance.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 109

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 109, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for coverage under the Medicare program of pharmacist services.

S. 122

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 122, a bill to prevent homeowners from being forced to pay taxes on foregone mortgage loan debt.

S. 170

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE) was added as a cosponsor

of S. 170, a bill to provide for non-preemption of measures by State and local governments to divest from entities that engage in commerce-related or investment-related boycott, divestment, or sanctions activities targeting Israel, and for other purposes.

S. 251

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 251, a bill to repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board in order to ensure that it cannot be used to undermine the Medicare entitlement for beneficiaries.

S. 567

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 567, a bill to amend the Home Owners' Loan Act to allow Federal savings associations to elect to operate as national banks, and for other purposes.

S. 722

At the request of Mr. CORKER, the names of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) were added as cosponsors of S. 722, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 722, *supra*.

S. 769

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 769, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to align physician supervision requirements under the Medicare program for radiology services performed by advanced level radiographers with State requirements.

S. 829

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 829, a bill to reauthorize the Assistance to Firefighters Grants program, the Fire Prevention and Safety Grants program, and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant program, and for other purposes.

S. 916

At the request of Mr. HOEVEN, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 916, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act with regard to the provision of emergency medical services.

S. 954

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 954, a bill to prevent harassment at institutions of higher education, and for other purposes.

S. 960

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) and the Senator

from Montana (Mr. DAINES) were added as cosponsors of S. 960, a bill to amend title 44, United States Code, to protect open, machine-readable databases.

S. 967

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 967, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to increase access to ambulance services under the Medicare program and to reform payments for such services under such program, and for other purposes.

S. 1020

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1020, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the proper tax treatment of personal service income earned in pass-thru entities.

S. 1055

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1055, a bill to restrict the exportation of certain defense articles to the Philippine National Police, to work with the Philippines to support civil society and a public health approach to substance abuse, to report on Chinese and other sources of narcotics to the Republic of the Philippines, and for other purposes.

S. 1099

At the request of Mr. CARPER, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1099, a bill to provide for the identification and prevention of improper payments and the identification of strategic sourcing opportunities by reviewing and analyzing the use of Federal agency charge cards.

S. 1109

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1109, a bill to amend title VIII of the Public Health Service Act to extend advanced education nursing grants to support clinical nurse specialist programs, and for other purposes.

S. 1151

At the request of Mr. BENNET, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1151, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a non-refundable credit for working family caregivers.

S. 1158

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1158, a bill to help prevent acts of genocide and other atrocity crimes, which threaten national and international security, by enhancing United States Government capacities to prevent, mitigate, and respond to such crises.

S. 1169

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Montana

(Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1169, a bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to provide States with an option to provide medical assistance to individuals between the ages of 22 and 64 for inpatient services to treat substance use disorders at certain facilities, and for other purposes.

S. 1186

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1186, a bill to authorize the Secretary of Transportation to designate certain entities as centers of excellence for domestic maritime workforce training and education, and for other purposes.

S. 1194

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1194, a bill to provide for the coverage of medically necessary food and vitamins for digestive and inherited metabolic disorders under Federal health programs and private health insurance, and for other purposes.

S. 1221

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1221, a bill to counter the influence of the Russian Federation in Europe and Eurasia, and for other purposes.

S. 1303

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1303, a bill to prohibit discrimination in adoption or foster care placements based on the sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status of any prospective adoptive or foster parent, or the sexual orientation or gender identity of the child involved.

S. 1307

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1307, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand eligibility to receive refundable tax credits for coverage under a qualified health plan.

S. 1312

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1312, a bill to prioritize the fight against human trafficking in the United States.

S. 1337

At the request of Mr. MANCHIN, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1337, a bill to amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to make certain strategic energy infrastructure projects eligible for certain loan guarantees, and for other purposes.

S.J. RES. 16

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Montana

(Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 16, a joint resolution approving the discontinuation of the process for consideration and automatic implementation of the annual proposal of the Independent Medicare Advisory Board under section 1899A of the Social Security Act.

S.J. RES. 42

At the request of Mr. MURPHY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 42, a joint resolution relating to the disapproval of the proposed export to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of certain defense articles.

AMENDMENT NO. 232

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the names of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 232 proposed to S. 722, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. BLUNT (for himself, Mr. REED, Mr. SCOTT, and Mr. MENENDEZ):

S. 1344. A bill to promote the development of local strategies to coordinate use of assistance under sections 8 and 9 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 with public and private resources, to enable eligible families to achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today Senator BLUNT and I are reintroducing the Family Self-Sufficiency Act, and we are pleased to be joined in this effort in this Congress by our colleagues, Senators SCOTT and MENENDEZ.

The Family Self-Sufficient, FSS, Program is an existing Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD, employment and savings incentive initiative for families that use section 8 vouchers or live in public housing. FSS provides participants access to the resources and training that enable them to pursue higher paying employment opportunities and meet financial goals, while putting FSS families in a better position to save by establishing an interest-bearing escrow account for them. Upon graduation from the FSS program, the family can use these savings to pay for job-related expenses, such as additional workforce training or the purchase or maintenance of a car needed for commuting purposes. In short, FSS is all about giving our constituents the incentives and the tools to move up the economic ladder.

Our bipartisan legislation enhances the FSS Program by streamlining the administration of this program, broadening the supportive services that can be provided, and extending the reach of the FSS Program to tenants who live in privately owned properties with project-based assistance. In short, we make the FSS Program easier to administer and more effective.

First, to streamline the FSS Program, our bill would permanently combine two separate but similar FSS Programs into one. Under the existing authorization, HUD is supposed to operate one FSS Program for those families served by the Housing Choice Voucher Program and another for those families served by the Public Housing Program. This is the case even though the purpose of each FSS Program—to increase economic independence and self-sufficiency—is identical. Unfortunately, without a permanent change in the authorization, public housing agencies, PHAs, may at some point in the future have to operate essentially two programs to achieve the same goal. With our bill, PHAs would be relieved of this unnecessary burden permanently.

Second, our legislation broadens the scope of the supportive services that may be offered to include attainment of a high school equivalency certificate, education in pursuit of a postsecondary degree or certification, and financial literacy, such as training in financial management, financial coaching, and asset building. Providing families in need with affordable rental housing is critical, but combining this resource with the support and services to help families get ahead increases the effectiveness of this Federal investment. Our legislation makes it easier for FSS participants to obtain the training necessary to secure employment and the education to make prudent financial decisions to protect and grow their earnings.

Lastly, our bill permanently extends the FSS Program to families who live in privately owned properties subsidized with project-based rental assistance. It shouldn't matter what kind of housing assistance a family gets. Families seeking to achieve self-sufficiency shouldn't be held back by this sort of technicality.

I thank Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Compass Working Capital, Housing Partnership Network, Preservation of Affordable Housing, National Housing Conference, Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future, National NeighborWorks Association, National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, Public Housing Authority Directors Association, Public Housing Association of Rhode Island, and Rhode Island Housing for their support. I also thank Senator BLUNT, Senator MENENDEZ, and Senator SCOTT for their partnership and I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill, which will help give those receiving housing assistance a greater chance to build their skills and achieve economic independence.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 234. Mr. PERDUE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 722, to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 234. Mr. PERDUE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 722, to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. _____. SEMIANNUAL REPORT ON IRAN AND NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR AND BALLISTIC MISSILE COOPERATION.

(a) **FINDINGS.**—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Iran developed a close working relationship with North Korea on many ballistic missile programs, dating back to an acquisition of Scud missiles from North Korea in the mid-1980s.

(2) By the mid-1980s North Korea reverse-engineered Scud B missiles originally received from Egypt, and developed the 500-kilometer range Scud C missile in 1991, and sold both the Scud B and Scud C, as well as missile production technology, to Iran.

(3) In 1992, then-Director of the Central Intelligence Robert Gates, in testimony to Congress, identified Iran as a recipient of North Korean Scud missiles.

(4) In 1993, then-Director of Central Intelligence James Woolsey provided more detail, stating that North Korea had sold Iran extended range Scud C missiles and agreed to sell other forms of missile technology.

(5) Annual threat assessments from the intelligence community during the 1990s showed that North Korea's ongoing export of ballistic missiles provided a qualitative increase in capabilities to countries such as Iran.

(6) The same threat assessments noted that Iran was using North Korean ballistic missile goods and services to achieve its goal of self-sufficiency in the production of medium-range ballistic missiles.

(7) The intelligence community assessed in the 1990s that Iran's acquisition of missile systems or key missile-related components could improve Iran's ability to produce an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

(8) Throughout the 2000s, the intelligence community continued to assess that North Korean cooperation with Iran's ballistic missile program was ongoing and significant.

(9) In 2007 a failed missile test in Syria caused the death of Syrian, Iranian, and North Korean experts.

(10) North Korea built the nuclear reactor in Syria that was bombed in 2007. Syria failed to report the construction of the reactor to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which was Syria's obligation under its safeguards agreement with the agency.

(11) Official sources confirm that Iran and North Korea have engaged in various forms of clandestine nuclear cooperation.

(12) North Korea and Iran obtained designs and materials related to uranium enrichment from a clandestine procurement network run by Abdul Qadeer Khan.

(13) In the early 2000s, North Korea exported, with the assistance of Abdul Qadeer Khan, uranium hexafluoride (UF₆) gas to Libya, which was intended to be used in Libya's clandestine nuclear weapons program.

(14) On January 6, 2016, North Korea conducted its fourth nuclear weapons test.

(15) On September 9, 2016, North Korea conducted its fifth nuclear weapons test.

(16) Iranian officials reportedly traveled to North Korea to witness its three previous nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, and 2013.

(17) Before North Korea's 2013 test, a senior American official was quoted as saying "it's very possible that North Koreans are testing for two countries".

(18) In September 2012, Iran and North Korea signed an agreement for technological and scientific cooperation.

(19) In an April 2015 interview with CNN, then-Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter said that North Korea and Iran "could be" cooperating to develop a nuclear weapon.

(20) On March 11, 2017, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats provided written testimony to Congress that stated that Pyongyang's "export of ballistic missiles and associated materials to several countries, including Iran and Syria, and its assistance to Syria's construction of a nuclear reactor . . . illustrate its willingness to proliferate dangerous technologies".

(21) A 2016 Congressional Research Service report confirmed that "ballistic missile technology cooperation between the two [Iran and North Korea] is significant and meaningful".

(22) Admiral Bill Gortney, Commander of United States Northern Command, testified to Congress on April 14, 2016, that "Iran's continuing pursuit of long-range missile capabilities and ballistic missile and space launch programs, in defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions, remains a serious concern".

(23) Iran has engaged in nuclear technology cooperation with North Korea.

(24) It has been suspected for over a decade that Iran and North Korea are working together on nuclear weapons development.

(25) Since the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Public Law 112-277) repealed requirements for the intelligence community to provide unclassified annual report to Congress on the "Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions", the number of unclassified reports to Congress on nuclear-weapons issues decreased considerably.

(26) North Korea's cooperation with Iran on nuclear weapon development is widely suspected, but has yet to be detailed by the President to Congress.

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

(1) the ballistic missile programs of Iran and North Korea represent a serious threat to allies of the United States in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia, members of the Armed Forces deployed in those regions, and ultimately the United States;

(2) further cooperation between Iran and North Korea on nuclear weapons or ballistic missile technology is not in the security interests of the United States or our allies;

(3) the testing and production by Iran of ballistic missiles capable of carrying a nuclear device is a clear violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015), which was unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council and supported by the international community; and

(4) Iran is using its space launch program to develop the capabilities necessary to deploy an intercontinental ballistic missile that could threaten the United States, and

the Director of National Intelligence has assessed that Iran would use ballistic missiles as its "preferred method of delivering nuclear weapons".

(c) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 180 days thereafter, the President, in coordination with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, and the heads of other relevant agencies, shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on nuclear and ballistic missile cooperation between the Government of Iran and the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea, including the identity of Iranian and North Korean persons that have knowingly engaged in or directed the provision of material support or the exchange of information between the Government of Iran and the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea on their respective nuclear programs.

(2) FORM.—The report required under paragraph (1) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex.

(3) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term "appropriate committees of Congress" means—

(A) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Armed Services, and the Select Committee on Intelligence of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Armed Services, and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I have 9 requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to Rule XXVI, paragraph 5 (a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, June 13, 2017, at 9:30 a.m., in open session.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, June 13, 2017, at 10 a.m., in room 406 of the Dirksen Senate office building, to conduct a hearing entitled, "Hearing on the Nominations of Kristine Svinicki (Reappointment), Annie Caputo and David Wright to be Members of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Nominations of Susan Bodine to be Assistant Administrator of the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency."

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the ses-

sion of the Senate on Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at 10 a.m., to hold a hearing entitled "Review of the FY 2018 State Department Budget Request."

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet, during the session of the Senate, in order to conduct a hearing entitled "The Cost of Prescription Drugs: How the Drug Delivery System Affects What Patients Pay" on Tuesday, June 13, 2017, at 10 a.m., in room 430 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Indian Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, June 13, 2017, in room SD-628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a legislative hearing.

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Indian Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, June 13, 2017, in room 628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a business meeting.

COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the 115th Congress of the U.S. Senate on Tuesday, June 13, 2017 from 2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m., in room SH-216 of the Senate Hart Office Building to hold an open hearing entitled "Open Hearing with Attorney General Jeff Sessions."

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWERS

The Subcommittee on Seapower of the Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, June 13, 2017, at 2:30 p.m., in open session, to receive testimony on Navy and Marine Corps aviation programs.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EAST ASIA

The Committee on Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asia is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at 2:30 p.m., to hold a hearing entitled "State-Sponsored Cyberspace Threats: Recent Incidents and U.S. Policy Response."

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that privileges of the floor be granted to the following members of my staff: Chris Burdick and Victoria King.

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

POLICE OFFICER SCOTT BASHIOUM POST OFFICE BUILDING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Sen-

ate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 92, S. 831.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 831) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 120 West Pike Street in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, as the "Police Officer Scott Bashioum Post Office Building."

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 831) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 831

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. POLICE OFFICER SCOTT BASHIOUM POST OFFICE BUILDING.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 120 West Pike Street in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, shall be known and designated as the "Police Officer Scott Bashioum Post Office Building".

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the "Police Officer Scott Bashioum Post Office Building".

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10:45 a.m. on Wednesday, June 14; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; finally, that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of S. 722 as under the previous order.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10:45 A.M. TOMORROW

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.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:18 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, June 14, 2017, at 10:45 a.m.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I was absent during Roll Call votes No. 300, and No. 301 due to my spouse's health situation in California. Had I been present, I would have voted Yea on H.R. 2292—To extend a project of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission involving the Cannonsville Dam. I would have also voted Yea on H.R. 2457—J. Bennett Johnston Waterway Hydropower Extension Act of 2017.

IN RECOGNITION OF JAMES DONALD GRAY III

HON. PATRICK MEEHAN

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a long-time member of my team here in my Washington, D.C. office. Today marks Jim Gray's last day with our office, after years of service that began when he was just an intern in my first term. Jim returned to my office as a staff assistant even before he had graduated from the University of Maryland, and balanced the demands of life on Capitol Hill against the completion of his academic course of study. Jim has always brought to my team a commitment to service and a relentless desire to get the job done.

Jim rose through the ranks to become one of my most trusted policy advisors, handling a broad policy portfolio including trade, defense and foreign affairs. He'll soon be departing Washington for sunny South Carolina, and I wish him the best. I know his parents, James Donald Gray Jr. and Teresa, and his sister Lindsay, are proud of him.

IN RECOGNITION OF ANDREA LUNA CERVANTES' RECEIPT OF THE 2017 HAMILTON SCHOLARS AWARD

HON. PAUL A. GOSAR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Ms. Andrea Luna Cervantes of Yuma, Arizona. Andrea is an accomplished and dedicated student who has devoted tremendous amounts of time and energy to her studies and to improving her community. I am excited to announce that Andrea is one of 35 national recipients of the 2017 Hamilton Scholars Award for outstanding academic accomplishments and community service. Her work

ethic, academic aptitude and ability to connect with people of all ages renders her receipt of this award no surprise.

Currently, Andrea is a rising senior at Yuma High School, where she is well on her way to becoming a productive service leader. In reaching this point, she has overcome many hardships through determination and a supportive community. I fully expect she will continue to grow into a productive and engaged citizen—exactly the kind of leader our society is in need of.

Those who know Andrea recognize that she has the natural ability to reach out and connect with people of all backgrounds. Included amongst her work in the community is her service as the Vice President of Junior State of America (JSA)—an American non-partisan youth organization that helps high school students acquire leadership skills and the requisite skills to be effective debaters and civic participants. She also serves as the President of her chapter of the National Honor Society—an academic membership-based organization that fosters a commitment to academic excellence. Andrea has competed at high levels of debate moderation and math competitions, and was a participant in the selective Yuma Youth Leadership program.

Andrea is an ambitious, high-achieving young woman. She embodies the characteristics which, when cultivated, give rise to the best of our society's leaders. It is an honor of mine to recognize this Hamilton Scholar, and I expect only the best from Andrea's future endeavors.

U.S. WWII MIA RECOVERY OPERATIONS IN INDIA

HON. GEORGE HOLDING

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. HOLDING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the ongoing and long-standing efforts to recover the remains of American service members who served during World War II in northeast India.

These service members remain missing in action to this day and they deserve a proper burial.

During World War II, the United States flew hundreds of supply missions on a route that included flight paths directly over the Himalayas through enemy territory from India to China.

Given these treacherous routes and hazardous flying conditions, the United States took heavy casualties.

To this day Mr. Speaker, U.S. airmen remain unrecovered and unburied.

Efforts to locate and document these crash sites have been intermittently undertaken by both private citizens and the U.S. Department of Defense.

Over the years, in addition to these documentation efforts, the Governments of the

United States and India have worked together to recover our service members.

However Mr. Speaker, the tempo of recovery operations could be categorized as slow at best for a variety of reasons, leaving the families of the deceased without closure.

Part of the problem involves the challenging conditions in which these crash sites are located—some have been located on the Himalayan mountainsides at altitudes approaching 10,000 feet.

Unfortunately Mr. Speaker, the single largest impediment to these recovery operations came when the Government of India placed a de facto moratorium on operations in Arunachal Pradesh for the vast majority of 2010 until 2015.

It should be noted during this time, that Leon Panetta, who at the time was Secretary of Defense, visited India and was able to secure permission for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command to recover remains and bring them back to the United States. The spirit of this agreement lives on today.

In early 2016, then-Secretary of Defense Ash Carter participated in a repatriation ceremony in New Delhi which highlighted a recovery operation undertaken by the Joint POW/MIA Account Command at the end of 2015.

Mr. Speaker, the United States and India today enjoy ever-increasing defense and security ties that underscore our strategic partnership.

As co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, I urge the Governments of the United States and India to increase their collaboration and accelerate the recovery of these remains. The families of those lost during World War II deserve closure. We need to bring our airmen home.

RECOGNIZING RICHARD J. SLOMA

HON. JOHN KATKO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Colonel Richard J. Sloma, a Syracuse native and second-generation Polish-American, who has dedicated much of his adult life to serving this great country and our community. Colonel Sloma enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve upon graduating high school and later went on to obtain his bachelor's degree from SUNY Oswego and his master's degree from the University at Albany. Colonel Sloma is currently a member of the Polish Legion of American Veterans—Post 14, the Syracuse Polish Home, the Polish American Historical Association, and serves as an Archivist for the New York State Archives in Albany.

This year, Colonel Sloma will be honored at the 2017 Syracuse Polish Festival as the "2017 Pole of the Year." He will be recognized for his dedicated service to our country.

Colonel Sloma served on U.S. Army active duty assignments in New York State, North

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

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

Dakota, and Italy. Colonel Sloma then joined the New York Army National Guard and was deployed to Afghanistan with the 27th Infantry Brigade from Syracuse in 2008. There, Colonel Sloma served as the Director of Intelligence for the Task Force Phoenix in Kandahar. Colonel Sloma later retired in 2013 with the rank of Colonel as the New York State Counterdrug Task Force Commander. Colonel Sloma had over 20 years of active duty experience and 31 years of total military experience, earning the Legion of Merit award, Bronze Star, Joint Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Commendation Medal, three Meritorious Medals, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, and the Airborne Badge.

I am honored to recognize Colonel Richard J. Sloma for his service to our great nation and upon being named "2017 Pole of the Year" by the Syracuse Polish Scholarship Fund, Inc.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF
WILLIAM H. HECHT

HON. DEVIN NUNES

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. NUNES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life and public service of William H. Hecht.

Born in Tifton, Georgia, Bill received a Master's of Divinity from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, and an M.A. in philosophy from Washington University. After serving as a Lutheran pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, he became a campus pastor at the University of Oklahoma.

Bill had a long history in both Missouri state politics and on the national stage in Washington, D.C. In 1967, he became the executive director of the Missouri State Republican Party. Two years later, he served as Vice President of the American Security Council, and in 1971 he became Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the House Committee on Internal Security. After serving as an advisor and spokesman for the Reagan for President Campaign, Bill founded the respected government relations firm Hecht, Spencer and Associates in 1981.

Bill was well known for his political camaraderie and engaging conversation. He was a regular at the Capitol Hill Club, where he was respected by lawmakers for his sharp wit and political advice. Bill also took great pride in mentoring some of the brightest young minds in Washington, dedicating his time to getting to know countless young people and their families. Bill was always direct, and even in the digital media age he exemplified the value of authentic relationships and person-to-person communication.

Outside of politics, Bill was deeply dedicated to his family and friends. He was a devoted husband, proud father, and loving grandfather. Bill touched the lives of many and will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

LAWRENCE ZHAO

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Lawrence Zhao, who is a 7th grade student at Next Generation School in Champaign, Illinois. Lawrence will be competing in the 2017 National You Be the Chemist Challenge. The You Be the Chemist Challenge is an interactive academic contest that invites students from all around the United States in Grades 5 to 8 to explore chemistry concepts and their real-world applications.

Lawrence has advanced through many rigorous levels of competition over the past school year to qualify for the national competition, which is held Monday, June 19th, in Washington D.C. The competition starts out at a local level, where students participate individually, with first the distribution of a quiz that relates to chemistry and those who pass it are eligible to participate in the local contest. The local contest consists of a quiz-bowl style format containing several rounds of multiple choice questions.

Lawrence won the local challenge and had the opportunity to compete in a similar style state-wide competition. Having received the highest score at the state challenge, he advanced to the national challenge. I applaud Lawrence Zhao for his exemplary performance thus far, and I wish him the best of luck in not only the challenge, but all his future endeavors.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KAY GRANGER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, due to a personal conflict, I was unable to make votes. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 300, and YEA on Roll Call No. 301.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LUIS V. GUTIÉRREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent in the House chamber for votes Monday, June 12, 2017. Had I been present, I would have voted Yea on Roll Call votes 300 and 301.

HONORING THE WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT CENTER

HON. NITA M. LOWEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Women's Enterprise Development

Center (WEDC) based in Westchester County, New York, which is celebrating its 20th Anniversary on June 15th.

Since its establishment in White Plains, NY, in 1997, the Women's Enterprise Development Center has helped hundreds of aspiring entrepreneurs start and grow their own businesses by providing them with training, advisory services, and access to capital. The more than 1600 graduates of WEDC's 60-hour Entrepreneurship Program have achieved business success in many fields ranging from accounting to moving organic food products to construction and landscaping to senior services. WEDC's clients include women who lack access to traditional business and financial resources. In 2015 alone, WEDC provided 1,666 motivated clients with the tools they needed to succeed.

The accomplishments of WEDC have not gone unnoticed, and over the years it has gained support from the federal, state and local governments as well as major corporations such as IBM, M&T Bank, MasterCard, Morgan Stanley Wealth Management, Verizon, and Wells Fargo. WEDC was recently designated as the New York Empire State Development Entrepreneurial Assistance Program (EAP) Center for the Mid-Hudson Valley, and its work has been recognized by the County governments of Westchester and Rockland as well as the U.S. Small Business Administration, which named it a Women's Business Center in 2003.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have worked for the last two decades with Anne Janiak, a founder and the CEO of WEDC, and her team to support entrepreneurial women in New York's Hudson Valley. I urge my colleagues to join me in applauding their 20 years of service to the Lower Hudson Valley and congratulate them as they celebrate this important anniversary.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JAMES B. RENACCI

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. RENACCI. Mr. Speaker, I was absent during rollcall votes No. 300 and No. 301. Had I been present, I would have voted yea on rollcall No. 300, and yea on rollcall No. 301.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce the District of Columbia National Park Service Improvement Act, a bill that would clarify that D.C. has the authority to enter into cooperative management agreements (CMAs) with the National Park Service (NPS) to maintain and invest in NPS properties in the city. NPS is the steward for many of our country's most beautiful natural wonders, but they are uniquely responsible for most of the small, urban parks here in the District. Given NPS's

limited budget and resources, we should be encouraging local jurisdictions to work collaboratively with NPS to make sure that our national parks are being cared for. States have already explored these opportunities, but my bill would remove any doubt that the District has the same authority as the states to enter into CMAs with NPS.

The city already has plans to enter into a CMA with NPS to take over operational jurisdiction of Franklin Park, an NPS park in downtown D.C. that has seen better days. The city plans to work with the Downtown Business Improvement District to transform the park to its former glory by ensuring regular maintenance and providing amenities such as food, gardens, and other services. As the city's downtown core has grown to include more housing, businesses, and workers, the need for green space has also grown. The city's plans for Franklin Park are a model for what can be done when local jurisdictions get creative about protecting and improving our nation's parks.

My bill is uncontroversial and simply clarifies that the District can provide financial support to NPS in order to maintain their property. This is a win for the city, the federal government, and all those who live in or visit the District and enjoy our NPS parks. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

RECOGNIZING PAUL FLETCHER

HON. KEN BUCK

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Paul Fletcher, a Naval Academy Appointee from Colorado's Fourth Congressional District. I believe our greatest assets are America's brave men and women in uniform. Paul is making an incredible sacrifice for our country and deserves our utmost support for his service. It is with great pleasure that I give him my endorsement to attend this prestigious institution.

Paul has demonstrated excellent leadership and service, acting as the Founder and President of several school clubs, in addition to serving as captain of his school's Wrestling Team. His exceptional athletic ability has been proven by his performance in wrestling and shooting sports. Paul was also a member of his high school's chapter of the National Honor Society in which he served as the chapter's Secretary.

Our nation owes no greater debt of gratitude than to those who fight to protect our freedom and liberty. I commend Paul and his family for their commitment. On behalf of the 4th Congressional District of Colorado, I extend my best wishes to Paul.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Paul Fletcher as an appointee to the Naval Academy for his commitment to protect and serve our nation.

CONGRATULATING JACIE KERSH
FOR BEING NAMED THE WINNER
OF DISTRICT 206'S GREAT
GALESBURG SHAKE

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jacie Kersh, a Galesburg High School senior, for being named the winner of District 205's Great Galesburg Shake.

The Great Galesburg Shake is an opportunity for young adults to demonstrate their manners and conversational skills in a professional environment. Thanks to this program, Jacie was able to learn important life skills such as engagement, confidence, a firm handshake, manners and conversational skills that will allow her to grow, succeed and become a leader in our community. I would like to recognize Jacie for standing out among the 120 students who participated, and for her tremendous composure which will serve her well in her bright future. I am proud to see such accomplished young individuals representing our community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to again formally congratulate Jacie Kersh on her incredible accomplishment, and I join the rest of our community in wishing her every success in the future.

THE MEMBERS OF CONNECTICUT'S
HOUSE DELEGATION HONOR
RUDY BROWN ON THE OCCASION
OF HIS RETIREMENT

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to rise today and join my Connecticut colleagues, JOHN LARSON, JOE COURTNEY, JIM HIMES, and ELIZABETH ESTY, in extending our deepest thanks and sincere appreciation to Rudy Brown, who, after a thirty-one year career with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, will be retiring later this year. As the government liaison for EPA's Region 1 office, each of us has had the opportunity to work with Rudy on a variety of projects over the years and owe him a great debt of gratitude for all of his good work.

In our roles as Members of Congress, we and our staffs deal with a number of federal agencies while working on behalf of our constituents and yet it is rare to find someone like Rudy. His dedication and commitment to his work and helping to fulfill the mission of the EPA are second to none. He has met every challenge with a willingness to roll-up his sleeves and see what could be done, and always with a smile.

In a career that has spanned over three decades, and with responsibilities to the six New-England States that make up EPA's Region 1, Rudy has spent countless hours ensuring that Congressional members and their staffs had the information and background they needed to address issues of concern to their residents. From large Superfund projects and issues concerning the Long Island Sound,

to cornfields redevelopment and grant announcements, we and our staffs have always known that we could count on Rudy's guidance and have never doubted that he would provide us with the best possible information, even if it was not necessarily what we were hoping to hear—that is an invaluable resource when it comes to constituent service.

As he comes up on his retirement, we stand together to say thank you to Rudy Brown—thank you for your thirty-one years of federal service, thank you for your unwavering commitment, and thank you for making the time to ensure that we have been able to serve our constituents in the best possible way. We have no doubt that his wife and daughters are looking forward to spending more time with him and wish him all the best for many more years of health and happiness as he enjoys this next chapter of his life.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, on June 12, 2017, I missed two votes due to a dental emergency. Had I been present, I would have voted: rollcall No. 300—Yea, and rollcall No. 301—yea.

RECOGNIZING REVEREND DR.
LOUIS E. SANDERS

HON. NITA M. LOWEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Reverend Dr. Louis E. Sanders, who is retiring this month from his position as Pastor of the St. Charles A.M.E. Zion Church in Sparkill, Rockland County, NY, in my District.

Throughout his life, Reverend Sanders has been deeply involved in the church and the philosophical questions surrounding religion. As a young student in North Carolina, he was active in the Mt. Hebron A.M.E. Zion Church before earning a BS degree in Social Science from North Carolina A&T, and MA and MS degrees from the City University of New York. He also received a Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary and a Doctorate of Humane Letters from St. Thomas Aquinas College in Sparkill, NY.

For the past 49 years, Reverend Sanders has served the people of New York's Lower Hudson Valley. In 1968, he was hired by the Tuckahoe Board of Education in Eastchester, New York, where he taught Social Studies for 30 years. He began his church ministry in 1970 and preached at Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church in Mount Vernon, NY. He would go on to serve various roles at churches throughout the Hudson Valley before being appointed Pastor of the St. Charles A.M.E. Zion Church in 1981.

As Pastor, Reverend Sanders has increased church membership tenfold and extended its impact far into the community. He began a program to aid homeless children from Harlem in developing positive life attitudes, an SAT tutorial program for minority students, and an

HIV/AIDS awareness program that provided on-site testing and educational programs. He has been a major proponent of civil rights and hosted discussions on apartheid in South Africa and human rights in the former Soviet Union. As a result of these efforts, he was inducted into the Rockland County Civil and Human Rights Hall of Fame in 2009, one of many well-deserved awards he has received.

Mr. Speaker, Reverend Sanders has improved the lives of countless people in his community and across the Lower Hudson Valley. I urge my colleagues to join me in applauding his years of inspired leadership and dedicated service to the residents of Rockland County, the Lower Hudson Valley, and New York State.

IN MEMORY OF MR. FERMON
LEWIS RACHELS

HON. JODY B. HICE

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Fermon Lewis Rachels, a World War II veteran and outstanding civil servant from my district who passed away in February of this year.

A member of the Greatest Generation, Mr. Rachels was born July 14, 1927 in Wrightsville, Georgia. He courageously put his life on the line during World War II, serving as a technician, fourth grade in the United States Army and was one of the last 12,000 WWII veterans alive in Georgia. After leaving the Army, he served as a Trade Craftsman Supervisor at the Georgia Department of Transportation, and at the time of his retirement, at age 84, he was the oldest active employee in Department of Transportation history. He was an active member of Brown Memorial Baptist Church and of the American Legion Post Number 44. Mr. Rachels was selected as Johnson County's Man of the Year in 1985.

Mr. Rachels is survived by his loving wife of 68 years, Hazel Carroll Rachels, his son, Charles Lewis Rachels, his daughter, Sharon Rachels, four grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

On behalf of the 10th District of Georgia and the United States of America, I want to extend my deepest gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Rachels and his family for his outstanding service to our nation and our community.

RECOGNIZING JEANETTE
STEERMAN

HON. KEN BUCK

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jeanette Steerman, a Naval Academy Appointee from Colorado's Fourth Congressional District. I believe our greatest assets are America's brave men and women in uniform. Jeanette is making an incredible sacrifice for our country and deserves our utmost

support for her service. It is with great pleasure that I give her my endorsement to attend this prestigious institution.

Jeanette has demonstrated excellent leadership and a heart for public service as Class President, National Honor Society President, and 4-H President at her high school. She was also an active member and award winner of her high school's FFA chapter, in which she held several leadership positions. Additionally, Jeanette qualified as an Honor Roll student for eight consecutive years and was given a variety of awards recognizing her outstanding academic achievements, including the Young Einstein Award.

Our nation owes no greater debt of gratitude than to those who fight to protect our freedom and liberty. I commend Jeanette and her family for their commitment. On behalf of the 4th Congressional District of Colorado, I extend my best wishes to Jeanette.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Jeanette Steerman as an appointee to the Naval Academy for her commitment to protect and serve our nation.

PASSING OF CARDINAL LUBOMYR
HUSAR

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, with deepest regret and gratitude for his precious and sacrificial life, I wish to include in the RECORD a tribute to the earthly life of Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, a worldwide pillar of holiness, unity, and righteousness. Remembered for his unwavering commitment to defeat tyranny in Ukraine and beyond, we honor his legacy as an indomitable defender of global harmony and respect for life.

Cardinal Husar's tireless dedication to his faith helped revive the spirit of an aching people. In an era fraught with division and tensions, he fought to preserve Greek Orthodoxy in Ukraine, using its teachings to restore the identity and morale of the nation, and to inspire millions beyond.

As he worked to bridge the fissures of a divided world, Cardinal Husar courageously sought to remedy the upheaval of the last century. Cardinal Husar welcomed John Paul II back to a former Soviet republic for the first time in a thousand years and helped strengthen global interfaith cooperation. I was privileged to be present at that magnificent and grand occasion during which a mass was offered in open fields outside Kyiv, hundreds of chalices gleamed in the sun as the eastern and western Catholic traditions opened the event to people of all traditions.

The Catholic Church in Poland was the vault of national memory and identity during the 123 years the nation was temporarily erased from the European map. Similarly, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church led the archival documentation of Ukraine's national identity and aspiration during the decades Stalin tried to starve Ukraine into defeat. Stalin's efforts to erase the Ukrainian language, history and culture, failed because of the Church's preservation.

Cardinal Husar championed and supported the establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic University's development in Lviv. Astoundingly, it is the only Catholic institution of higher learning in the former Soviet space, a credit to Cardinal Husar's leadership. Even today, it remains one of the pillars of higher education in Ukraine, uncorrupted by the grim Soviet legacy.

An enlightened figure, his temperance and compassion instilled significant progress in the greater reconciliation efforts underway.

A national symbol, Cardinal Husar guided his homeland through an era of great uncertainty, as it struggled to shed the horrors of the past and regained independence with the historic opportunity to build forward toward an open and more democratic society, and vital crossroads between East and West. Driven by his own internal moral compass, his teachings helped to usher in a new era of freedom and unity. He exuded eternal hope for his newly emancipated people. For the Cardinal, freedom itself was more than liberty; ultimately, it provided him "the opportunity to do good."

The last time I had the privilege of speaking with Cardinal Husar, his vision was failing him. But he was completely lucid and urged me to always maintain hope for the future. When he exited the meeting, he proceeded up the stairwell of his residence with a lit candle in hand. That flame continues to burn bright in his memory.

Cardinal Husar's teachings have preserved a spirited and theological legacy instructing future generations for years to come. May his teachings continue to inspire and involve our work every day towards a unified global community. Against all darkness, I am confident the light of Lubomyr Husar will continue to shine and endure. May his soul guide and protect his beloved homeland.

HONORING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY
OF CANADA'S CONFEDERATION

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and recognize the 150th Anniversary of Canada's Confederation.

As one of our closest allies and largest trading partners, our country shares a historic bond with the people of Canada. This connection is deeply felt by North Country residents, who hold strong economic and cultural ties with our neighbors across the border.

In celebrating Canada's foundation, it is only fitting that we also celebrate the nation's first capital city; Kingston, Ontario. Located directly across the Saint Lawrence River from New York's 21st district, the city holds an essential place in Canadian history; serving as the birthplace of Canada's first Prime Minister, John Alexander Macdonald.

Congratulations to the people of Canada as they celebrate this remarkable milestone. I am confident that our unique and enduring friendship will continue for many years to come.

CELEBRATING THE BROWARD
COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH
COURT'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Broward County Mental Health Court on celebrating its 20th Anniversary on June 23, 2017.

This year's Anniversary will honor the Broward County Public Defender, Mr. Howard Finkelstein; the Honorable Dale Ross; the Broward Sheriff's Office; the Broward Behavioral Health Coalition; the United Way of Broward County; Henderson Behavioral Health; the Broward County Crime Commission; the Mental Health Association of Southeast Florida; and the National Alliance on Mental Illness Broward County. All of these outstanding individuals and organizations deserve this honor as they have devoted countless hours and years to helping those with mental illness navigate an often unforgiving criminal justice system.

As we celebrate this august occasion, I would be remiss if I did not single out the efforts of Judge Ginger Lerner-Wren. Judge Lerner-Wren was tasked with presiding over and administering our country's first Mental Health Court in 1997, shortly after taking the bench. Since that time, she has been a leader in the field of Therapeutic Jurisprudence and the justice that emanates therefrom. Judge Lerner-Wren, and all those who work for the Mental Health Court, as well as those dedicated to the cause of Therapeutic Jurisprudence really have one simple goal in mind—ensuring dignity for those suffering from mental illness, who find themselves navigating our criminal justice system.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud all those associated with Broward County's Mental Health Court over the past 20 years. Their work has made an important difference in the lives of those dealing with mental health issues, to their families, and our community. I wish the Court many more years of continued success, and look forward to championing their important work in Congress.

TRUMP CUTTING THE EPA
WATERSENSE PROGRAM MAKES
NO SENSE AT ALL

HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with my colleagues a column written by Mary Ann Dickinson on the importance of the WaterSense program, which for ten years has saved consumers money and helped to conserve limited water resources.

TRUMP CUTTING THE EPA WATERSENSE
PROGRAM MAKES NO SENSE AT ALL

(By Mary Ann Dickinson)

President Trump promised clean water for all Americans while preserving our natural resources. Yet his recently announced 2018 budget seeks to eliminate or drastically curtail programs that do just that.

It is especially perplexing to see EPA's small but mighty WaterSense program on the chopping block. WaterSense, like its larger predecessor EnergyStar, is a voluntary water product-labeling program that partners with business and communities to enhance the market for water-efficient fixtures and appliances. In this way, WaterSense encourages consumers to purchase products that save water and energy.

In just ten years since its launch, the WaterSense program has already made valuable contributions to building water security for American communities. It has saved more than 1.5 trillion gallons of water, enough to serve all of California's residents for a year. Those savings help protect the nation's water future—ensuring that more water is available for future generations, emergencies and our waterways. Less water used also means less energy used to heat, pump and treat water—thereby eliminating 78 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions from our atmosphere.

The blue and green WaterSense logo helps customers easily choose new toilets, showerheads, faucets and irrigation controllers that have been independently certified to perform as well as or better than standard models—while using at least 20 percent less water.

That choice is good for American families that already spend an average of \$1,100 per year on water. In fact, it has already saved consumers \$32.6 billion in water and energy bills. With water rates rising each year, WaterSense can help families better manage their household expenses.

But WaterSense isn't just delivering more reliable and affordable water to consumers; it's actually driving innovation and supporting economic growth—goals at the core of Trump's platform.

Large American plumbing and irrigation manufacturers have seen their businesses grow by adding WaterSense-labeled products to their portfolios, while start-ups and smaller shops are getting their products to market more quickly, thanks to the clearly defined performance standards and certification process in the WaterSense program. This has resulted in a competitive edge for companies manufacturing American-made WaterSense products. In addition, as water becomes more scarce and expensive, WaterSense can help all businesses reduce their operating costs and increase their resiliency by installing high-efficiency fixtures in their facilities.

WaterSense isn't a mandatory program or an example of overreaching and costly regulations. It is a voluntary, public-private partnership program where businesses and communities opt in to participate.

And they have overwhelmingly opted in. More than 1,700 partners build their businesses and support their communities by participating in the WaterSense program. Nearly 200 of them recently signed a letter asking EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to continue to fund it into the future.

So how much money is it? WaterSense costs taxpayers a mere \$3.1 million per year to run—a meager federal expenditure for a significant economic benefit delivered to businesses and individuals. Continued public investment is key. A product labeling program run by the private sector would lack objectivity and credibility to consumers.

The WaterSense program is the best kind of government program. It leverages a small public investment into big savings for homeowners and businesses, while ensuring secure and sustainable water supplies. Let's make sure it stays in the 2018 budget.

HONORING LOUIS S. D'ANTONIO ON
THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIRE-
MENT

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to join family, friends, and colleagues in paying tribute to Louis S. D'Antonio as he marks his retirement after more than three decades with Gateway Community College.

A native of New Haven, Lou has dedicated a lifetime of service to our community. Following his graduation from New Haven public schools, Lou earned both his bachelor and master's degrees at Fairfield University. I had the good fortune to get to know Lou when we worked together for Community Progress Inc., an anti-poverty agency focused on education and employment. From his earliest days, Lou understood the critical connection between education and the workforce. Prior to joining Gateway, Lou also held positions with the New Haven Office of Manpower and the New Haven Employment and Training Administration.

Lou began his career with Gateway Community College, known then as South Central Community College, in 1981 as the Director of Community Services and Continuing Education. He soon became Associate Dean of Community Affairs and in 1989 was appointed to his current position as Dean of Administrative Affairs. In this capacity, Lou was responsible for the oversight of a myriad of administrative and financial support services including facilities, maintenance and event management, financial affairs, information technology, institutional research as well as safety and security. At its core, Lou ensured that the campus was prepared to meet the demands of faculty, students, and the community.

Lou's contributions to Gateway have been innumerable. His brought a unique perspective to various college committees including the health and safety committee as well as the NEASC committee. He represented the college as a member of the Board of Directors of the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce and the Personnel and Finance Committee of Workforce Alliance. And in what has been the singularly most transformative measure for Gateway, Lou headed up the Building Committee for its new downtown campus which opened in 2015. The development of this state-of-the-art campus has ensured that Gateway Community College is ready to help prepare its students for the 21st century workforce today and for decades to come.

Today, as he celebrates his retirement after a distinguished career, I am honored to have this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks and heartfelt congratulations to Louis S. D'Antonio for all of his good work on behalf of Gateway Community College and the City of New Haven. I wish Lou and his wife, Adrienne, as well as their five children, Robert, Daniel, Lisa, Amy and Lisa; and their seven grandchildren the very best for many more years of health and happiness as they enjoy this next chapter.

HONORING RUDY CASTRO

HON. RAÚL M. GRIJALVA

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to honor the life of Rudy Castro—a Marine Corps veteran, devoted educator, civic leader, and lifelong baseball player and coach.

Rudy was born and raised in Barrio Anita in Tucson, attended Davis Elementary, Roskrue Jr. High and graduated from Tucson High School in 1949. Since his first days playing with friends in Oury Park, Rudy's talent for baseball was clear; even at a young age, Rudy could be found playing with kids five years older than him just to find a challenge, and was so talented that he started playing with the Tucson High School varsity baseball team in 7th grade.

Rudy's remarkable athletic abilities were not just restricted to baseball—in high school, Rudy played football, baseball, and basketball, leading his teams to several championships all while serving on his school's student council and maintaining a high GPA. This earned him the attention of the baseball coach of Palo Verde Junior College who promptly offered him a baseball scholarship.

Rudy initially turned down the offer so that he could find a job and help support his family. Fortunately, when his mother heard about the scholarship, she immediately packed Rudy's bags for him. After just two years of junior college, Rudy joined the Marine Corps during the Korean War and served in the infamous "E Company" for the next four years.

In 1951, Rudy and 100 other young servicemen tried out for the Camp Pendleton Baseball team, and Rudy was one of just 20 to make the cut. After touring with his team across the country and winning All-Marine honors as an outstanding shortstop, Rudy went back to school to play baseball at the University of Arizona on another full-ride scholarship. After graduating, Rudy began his career as a teacher, teaching at Safford Junior High, Roskrue K-8, and finally became the baseball coach at Cholla High School.

After returning to school for a dual master's degree, Rudy was named Director of the Extended Day School at Tucson High School, where he spent a decade encouraging students to keep working toward obtaining their diplomas. He was a devoted coach and teacher even outside of school, spending his summers and free time coaching baseball and volunteering as a referee and umpire for high school games. In addition, he is remembered by his former players and students as a person who was always willing to listen to their problems and offer them advice as they became older.

A prominent member of the Tucson political community as well, Rudy served as a Tucson City Councilman for nine years, as well as serving on the Selective Service Board, Pima County Grievance Committee, and as the first chairman of the Pima County Sports Authority. In retirement, Rudy played baseball well into his 70's, earning him membership in the Senior League Baseball Hall of Fame and the Southern Pima County Sports Hall of Fame. As a political leader, education advocate, friend, and father, Rudy made a huge impact

on many lives and on the Tucson community at large—his passion for life and love for the people around him will never be forgotten.

He is survived by his wife, Carol; daughter, Linda (Tom) Spencer and son Rudy; daughters, Julie and Celina; sister, Alice Rice; brother, Rick (Helen) Acedo and half-brother, Albert; grandchildren, KC McCall, and Holly and Thomas Bolen as well as many other loving relatives. Rudy Castro's life is part of the unique and special character of Tucson, just as Rudy was a unique and special character himself.

HONORING THE LIFE OF FRANK J. HOSO, JR.

HON. TIM RYAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Frank J. Hoso, Jr. who passed away on Friday, June 2, 2017. He was surrounded by his loving family. He leaves his wife Sylvia and 9 children behind.

Frank was born on May 17, 1934 in Niles, Ohio, and he remained a lifelong resident of Niles. Frank was a 1952 graduate of St. Mary's High School and then continued on to pursue a Bachelor Degree in Education at Kent State University. Frank also courageously served our country in the United States Army Reserves. After leaving the Army, he went on to earn a Master Degree in Education in 1968 from Westminster College, and he took additional Post Graduate classes at Youngstown State University. Frank was married to wife Sylvia for 57 years, and together they shared 12 adoring children.

Frank worked as a teacher for much of his career. He began teaching junior high at Saints Peter and Paul School from 1959–1969 before going on to teach for 39 years at Warren City Schools. Even after he retired as a full-time teacher, he continued to assist as a substitute teacher.

Frank was also an active member of his community. He served with the United States Army Reserves for five years before being honorably discharged on November 20, 1962 with the rank of Corporal. Additionally, he was a faithful member of Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Warren, where he tended to the parish cemetery.

I extend my deepest condolences to Frank's family and friends. He was a wonderful man who leaves behind an extensive legacy. He will be dearly missed.

RECOGNIZING KATHERINE MURPHY

HON. KEN BUCK

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Katherine Murphy, a West Point Appointee from Colorado's Fourth Congressional district. I believe our greatest assets are America's brave men and women in uniform. Katherine is making an incredible sacrifice for our country and deserves our utmost support

for her service. It is with great pleasure that I give her my endorsement to attend this prestigious institution.

Katherine has demonstrated her commitment to public service through her involvement in Student Government, Student Council, and Community Service Club. She was an active member of her high school's chapter of the National Honor Society as well as the Spanish National Honor Society. Additionally, in recognition of her outstanding athletic and academic achievements, Katherine was named "Rookie of the Year" for the Varsity Cross Country team and received the Colorado Girls State Outstanding Citizen Award.

Our nation owes no greater debt of gratitude than to those who fight to protect our freedom and liberty. I commend Katherine and her family for their commitment. On behalf of the 4th Congressional District of Colorado, I extend my best wishes to Katherine.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Katherine Murphy as an appointee to West Point for her commitment to protect and serve our nation.

HONORING DR. ANTOINETTE IADAROLA ON THE OCCASION OF HER RETIREMENT

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is with my sincere thanks and heartfelt congratulations that I rise today to join staff, faculty, students, board members, and alumnae in paying tribute to Dr. Antoinette "Toni" Iadarola, President of Luralton Hall, as she marks her retirement from an auspicious career in education and administration. Toni's leadership and vision over the course of her tenure as President has ensured that Luralton Hall will continue to meet its mission of empowering young women for life.

Toni earned her bachelor's degree in history and political science at St. Joseph College, her master's and doctoral degrees in European diplomatic history from Georgetown University, and post-doctoral grants for studies at Yale and Fordham Universities. A former Fulbright scholar associated with Oxford University, Toni held an impressive list of academic and administrative posts before coming to Luralton Hall; Chair of the History Department and Coordinator of Women Studies at Saint Joseph College in Connecticut, Dean of Faculty at the College of Mt. St. Joseph in Ohio, and Provost at Colby-Sawyer in New Hampshire, and 16 years as President and Professor of History of Cabrini College.

Toni's background extends far beyond academia. Her passion for community service led to her participation as a volunteer consultant on several projects funded by the State Department: working with women NGOs in Belarus, discussing privatization issues in higher education in Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. She was also invited to the United Nations to serve on the Commission for Disarmament Education, Conflict Resolution and Peace, an NGO established by the International Association of University Presidents, presenting on behalf of the Commission in South Africa, Australia, and Thailand. Toni has

also done volunteer work in orphanages in Swaziland and Guyana.

It was this awe-inspiring world of experiences that she brought with her as she took the helm at Luralton Hall in 2009 and that she has shared with faculty, staff, and students. Over the course of her eight-year tenure as President, she has focused her attention on modernizing the campus, which has not only met the needs of today's educators and students, but has made Luralton Hall more competitive as a whole. The creation of an Internet Cafe, a Center for Guidance and College Planning, the addition of an athletic practice field, classroom renovations to accommodate today's technologies, and the conversion of the carriage barn for the music program are just some of the projects that have been started or completed under her guiding hand. Toni has given Luralton Hall a solid foundation on which to continue its success in preparing young women for their future success.

I would be remiss if I did not extend a special note of thanks to Toni for her friendship over the years. Luralton Hall holds a special place in my heart—some of my fondest memories are of my time there. It has been an honor and privilege to work with Toni to build on the school's 108-year history and the incredible impact it has had on the young women who have matriculated there.

As an alumnus of Luralton Hall and as a friend, I am honored to stand today to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Antoinette Iadarola for her outstanding contributions as President of Luralton Hall. She leaves a legacy that will continue to inspire staff, faculty, students, and alumnae alike. I wish her all the best for many more years of health and happiness as she enjoys her retirement.

HONORING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF MOUNTAIN LAKE PBS

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and recognize the Public Broadcasting Service of Mountain Lake on their 40th Anniversary.

The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) is a non-profit organization with a mission of enriching and inspiring communities around the country. Through its 350 member stations, PBS is able to provide television and radio programming for all ages, ranging from local and national news, to educational shows for both children and adults. Reaching 82 percent of all American households, the work of PBS allows people from all walks of life to experience a broader world.

In my district, Mountain Lake PBS serves an especially important role, bringing news and entertainment to the people of Upstate New York, Vermont, Quebec, and Ontario. Their work has greatly expanded the options available to North Country residents, whether they are parents looking for fun and informational programming for their children, or adults looking for more choices in news or recreation.

I would like to thank Mountain Lake PBS for making the betterment of our community a priority during their 40 years of broadcasting.

HONORING JACK HEALY

HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Jack Healy, former President and CEO of the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership, who passed away in late April. The City of Worcester was shaped by its manufacturing heritage, and thanks to Jack, manufacturing remains a part of Worcester's future. I had the pleasure of working with Jack for many years and was proud to call him a partner in revitalizing our manufacturing base and creating good paying jobs across Massachusetts.

In 1999, after a long and successful career at Presmet Corp., LEGO Systems, Squibb-Beech-Nut Inc. and the Wellesley Group, Jack founded MassMEP to help manufacturers adapt to the evolving economic climate. Under Jack's guidance, many in-state manufacturers successfully pivoted to advanced manufacturing and management practices that helped them not only survive, but also grow.

Jack and MassMEP, through initiatives like the award-winning Mobile Outreach Skills Training (M.O.S.T.) Program, helped companies to compete with foreign advanced manufacturers by closing the skills gap, proving training and creating employment opportunities for people with little to no manufacturing experience. Thanks to the tireless work and dedication of Jack and the others at the Partnership, MassMEP has helped to create thousands of new jobs and has been recognized as a leader in manufacturing competitiveness. It's no wonder why Jack is known as the "voice of manufacturing" in Massachusetts.

Beyond his work with MassMEP, the City of Worcester is indebted to Jack for the key role he played in the "Manufacturing Our Future" effort in Central Massachusetts. These annual summits fostered partnerships between industry, academia, and government that have significantly advanced local manufacturing competitiveness. Notably, this partnership is responsible for developing Worcester's Gateway Park, formerly an underused, 11-acre industrial area, into a beautiful bioengineering research complex that is attracting significant private investment and generating hundreds of new jobs.

Jack had a razor sharp Irish wit matched with a New York City toughness that barely covered a heart of gold. His epic battles over federal funding for MassMEP are legendary, and showed what a tenacious and relentless advocate Jack was for the organization he led. He was among the most loyal and thoughtful business leaders I encountered, and he counseled and helped countless small manufacturers transition into the new reality of lean, precision manufacturing. He never lost sight of the worker on the shop floor who needed retraining and new job skills to survive and thrive in the age of automation.

Jack was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather. He will be dearly missed by his beloved wife of over 60 years, Hilda, his children John, Robert, Mary, and Joseph, his son-in-law Dr. Mark Watkins, his daughters-in-law Grace, Paula, and Amy, and all of his grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Jack was an incredible partner in revitalizing the Massachusetts manufacturing base, and I'm proud to have called him a friend.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life of Jack Healy.

RECOGNIZING JULIA WYATT

HON. KEN BUCK

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Julia Wyatt, a West Point Appointee from Colorado's Fourth Congressional district. I believe our greatest assets are America's brave men and women in uniform. Julia is making an incredible sacrifice for our country and deserves our utmost support for her service. It is with great pleasure that I give her my endorsement to attend this prestigious institution.

Julia has demonstrated her commitment to public service, holding a variety of leadership positions in her high school's chapter of the National Honor Society, Key Club, Leaders for Life, and Student Council. She also received numerous awards recognizing her outstanding athletic and academic achievements, including the Presidential Award, Honors Biology Academic Distinction Award, and Ironworks Academic Distinction Medal.

Our nation owes no greater debt of gratitude than to those who fight to protect our freedom and liberty. I commend Julia and her family for their commitment. On behalf of the 4th Congressional District of Colorado, I extend my best wishes to Julia.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Julia Wyatt as an appointee to West Point for her commitment to protect and serve our nation.

IN MEMORY OF LARRY SULC

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on June 7, 2017, a thoughtful memorial service was conducted by Dr. Carl J. Broggi at Arlington National Cemetery for American Hero Larry Sulc.

The following obituary, published in The Washington Post on February 12, 2017, clearly identifies his devotion to promoting freedom:

Lawrence Bradley "Larry" Sulc, a former Intelligence Officer and founder of the Nathan Hale Foundation, died February 1, 2017, in Beaufort, SC, due to complications from Alzheimer's disease. The son of an electrician who moved his family from New Jersey to the Panama Canal Zone during the Great Depression, Larry, and his older brother David grew up exploring the jungles of Panama. He was a proud "Canal Zone Boy." In 1944, at 17, Larry joined the U.S. Navy and served in WWII in the Pacific theater. After graduating from Stanford, he was recruited by the CIA and served for 25 years in Latin America, Europe and the Far East. Early in his career as an operative, during the Korean War, he and future Commandant of the Marine Corps Robert Barrow, trained and led Nationalist Chinese

guerrillas, conducting raids on the Chinese coast and Chinese shipping drawing Communist resources away from our boys in the Korean War. After retiring from the agency Larry served first in the U.S. House of Representatives on the Foreign Affairs Committee staff, then as Executive Director, House Republican Study Committee. He was later appointed by President Ronald Reagan as Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of State (Inter-Departmental Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research). After leaving public service, he consulted on matters of risk assessment, corporate security, counterintelligence and counterterrorism. Larry was predeceased by his parents and his older brother, David. He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Jean Luena Mestres Sulc of St. Helena Island, SC and his four children from his first marriage to Marian Sulc Scambos of Arlington, VA: Bradley Sulc (Carolyn), Wayne Sulc (Lourdes), Katherine Dwyer (Terrence) and Brian Sulc, residing in the Washington, DC capitol area. He is also survived by his 13 grandchildren, Michael, Brian, Moriah, Jackson, Elizabeth, Savanna, Hunter, Maggie, Sierra, Sonora, Stephanie, Michelle and Bojan. Remembrances are welcomed and appreciated for Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, 300 New Jersey Avenue, NW Suite 900, Washington, DC 20001 and Community Bible Church's, Mission Programs, P.O. Box 119, Beaufort, SC 29901. An inurnment ceremony will take place at Arlington National Cemetery, at a later date.

SIXTEENTH DISTRICT CONGRESSIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AWARDS

HON. VERN BUCHANAN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to law enforcement men and women who have provided distinctive service to the people of Florida's 16th Congressional District.

Law enforcement is a demanding profession that requires sacrifice, courage and a dedication to serve others. Every day, brave men and women put themselves in harm's way to enforce the laws of our society and protect public safety. They deserve our gratitude and respect.

Six years ago, I established the 16th District Congressional Law Enforcement Awards, CLEA, to give special recognition to law enforcement officers, departments, or units for exceptional achievement.

This year, I will present congressional law enforcement awards to the following winners chosen by an independent panel comprised of current and retired law enforcement personnel representing a cross-section of the district's law enforcement community.

Officer Jason Nuttall of the Bradenton Police Department will receive the Dedication and Professionalism Award.

Captain John Walsh, Captain Debra Kaspar, Lieutenant Jon Varley, Community Affairs Director Kaitlyn Perez, Deputy Phillip Mockler,

Detective Tim Speth and Investigator Lynn Thomson of the Sarasota County Sheriff's will receive the Dedication and Professionalism Award.

Detective Richard Wilson of the Palmetto Police Department will receive the Dedication and Professionalism Award.

Officer Alan Bores of the Holmes Beach Police Department will receive the Dedication and Professionalism Award.

Detective Justin Warren of the Manatee County Sheriff's Office will receive the Dedication and Professionalism Award.

Sergeant Robert Armstrong of the Sarasota Police Department will receive the Dedication and Professionalism Award.

Deputy Kevin Smetana of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office will receive the Dedication and Professionalism Award.

Master Sergeant George Taunton of The Florida Highway Patrol will receive the Career Service Award.

Troopers Caleb Kerr and Trooper Brett Fitzpatrick of the Florida Highway Patrol will receive the Preservation of Life Award.

Sergeant Patrick Roberts of the Florida Highway Patrol will receive the Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Award.

Pastor Patrick Miller, Pastor Vincent Smith, Doctor Harriet Moore, Geoffrey Gilot and Al-Muta Hawks all affiliated with the Boys and Girls Club of Sarasota will receive the Associate Service Award.

The Manatee County Special Investigations Division will receive the Unit Citation Award. The members of this unit are: Major William Jordan, Captain Todd Shear, Lieutenant Anthony Carr, Division Secretary Toni Burton, Administrative Assistant Cindy Hoffman, Sergeant Jason Powell, Detective James Parrish, Detective Kim Zink, Detective Greg Dunlap, Detective Mike Diaz, Bruce Benjamin (Crime Stoppers), Amber Hoffman (Manager), Erica Chenard (UCR Coordinator), Criminal Analyst Ashley Eannarino, Criminal Analyst Elicia Main, Intel Analyst Don Brown, Criminal Analyst John Ferrito, Intel Analyst Elizabeth Thomas, Sergeant Evelio Perez, Detective Joseph Petta, Detective Justin Warren, Detective Derek Pollock, Detective Eric Davis, Detective Ray Richter, Detective Patrick Thames, Detective Scott Williamson, Sergeant Gary Combee, Detective William Freel, Detective Maria Gillum, Detective Bryce Wilhelm, Detective Jonathan Kruse, Sergeant Steve Barron, Detective Randall Walker, Detective Brian Beck, Detective Shayne Rousseau, Detective Jeremy Martin, Detective Robert Brigham, Sergeant Isaac Redmond, Detective Rafael Ortegon, Detective Christopher Gallagher, Detective Joel Taylor, Detective David Bocchino, and Detective Lourdes Santiago, Detective Aaron Bowling, Sergeant Brian Quiles, Detective Wendy Zarvis.

CELEBRATING THE 225TH ANNIVERSARY OF MILTON

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and recognize the 225th Anniversary of Milton, New York.

Located on Kayaderosseras Creek in the heart of Saratoga County, the town of Milton demonstrates the rich and evolving history of Upstate New York. Even before it was officially established on March 7, 1792, Milton's forests and water supplies provided early pioneers with a fertile environment for their settlements. Included amongst these early establishments were the water mills, which provided the town's namesake and acted as a driving force for economic development into the 20th century.

In 1948, the Kesselring Site of the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program came to West Milton, becoming a major employer in the area. To this day, the site serves an important role in training the servicemen and women who operate our country's nuclear powered submarines and aircraft. Many Milton residents also commute to New York's Capital region, where they serve their community by working in local and state government.

While continuing to grow and develop, the town of Milton provides valuable services and a strong sense of community to its residents. Milton has five established parks for outdoor recreation, as well as a variety of other rural recreation areas for people to enjoy. Additionally, the town works with nearby Ballston Spa to preserve their shared environment and to care for the elderly in their populations.

I would like to congratulate the town of Milton on its 225th Anniversary. In New York's 21st District, we are proud of this momentous occasion and look forward to the many years which lie ahead.

RECOGNIZING SEVEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS CHOSEN TO REPRESENT COLORADO AS DELEGATES AT THE CONGRESS OF FUTURE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY LEADERS

HON. KEN BUCK

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize seven high school students who have been chosen to represent the state of Colorado as delegates at the Congress of Future Science and Technology Leaders. The students are Sebastian Comeaux, Dominic Plaia, Michael Bremd, Ethan Drake, Itzel Martinez Bernal, Crystal Kechter, and James Reeder.

The Congress of Future Science and Technology Leaders is an honors program that recognizes exceptional high school students who are pursuing careers as engineers, scientists, or technologists.

These students are the future leaders of the STEM fields and our country. Through their studies, they have embodied the meaning of hard work and perseverance to achieve their goals, and will advance science and technology for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to recognize these students from the fourth district of Colorado for their hard work and service to our community. I wish them the best in their future endeavors.

HONORING DORSEY L. KENDRICK, PH.D, PRESIDENT OF GATEWAY COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ON THE OCCASION OF HER RETIREMENT

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, it is with profound respect and admiration that I rise today to join family, friends, colleagues and community leaders in extending my deepest thanks and appreciation to Dr. Dorsey L. Kendrick as she celebrates her retirement as President of Gateway Community College in New Haven, Connecticut. Over the course of her nearly two decades of leadership, Dorsey has both literally and figuratively changed the face of Gateway, leaving an indelible mark on the college and our community.

Dorsey's unique personal story is the core of her personal passion for education and creating opportunity for students. A native of Jackson, Tennessee, Dorsey was one of three African-American students—and the only woman—to initiate integration at Union University. After earning a Bachelor's of Science degree in business administration at Union, she went on to earn an M.S. in Business Administration at Cardinal Stritch University and a Ph.D. in Philosophy in Higher Education from Walden University. She is also a graduate of the Institute of Education Management at Harvard University. Prior to appointment at Gateway, Dorsey was the first African-American woman to be named associate dean and then dean of the School of Business Management at Milwaukee Area Technical College. She later became the school's executive vice-president and the highest-ranking African-American woman in Wisconsin's higher education system.

The legacy Dorsey leaves at Gateway Community College is nothing short of awe-inspiring. In her first eight years at the helm. The school's enrollment more than doubled and today Gateway is the largest of Connecticut's twelve community colleges, serving more than 12,000 undergraduates every year. Dorsey not only created a nursing program but under her leadership the college has bolstered program offerings in the fields of allied health, green technologies, the culinary arts, early childhood education, and business. She was one of the first to recognize the importance of working with local industries to develop curriculum and certificate programs that would ensure students are prepared for the needs of the local job market. Perhaps her crowning achievement has been the creation the Gateway's new campus in Downtown New Haven. The four-story, LEED Gold-certified complex opened in August 2012 and is home to extraordinary classrooms and state-of-the-art labs, creating a learning environment that is second to none.

During her tenure, I have had many opportunities to work with Dorsey and found a kindred spirit in the effort to expand access to higher education, enable students to realize their full potential, and make their dreams a reality. From creating partnerships with local industries to prepare students for the jobs of today to providing resources to local veterans, and from addressing a nursing shortage to preparing students for a changing manufac-

turing sector, it has been my honor to work side by side with her. I cannot thank her enough for her friendship and counsel over the years.

At her inauguration Dorsey stated "I plan to leave my footprints on this college"—she has done that and so much more. She has created lasting partnerships on which Gateway Community College can build future success. Her advocacy and dedication has ensured that the doors of opportunity are open for Gateway's students, and her innovative vision has created a campus ready to prepare a 21st century workforce. Though her retirement marks the end of an era, I have no doubt that Dorsey will continue to find ways to make a difference in our community. It is my great honor to rise today to thank Dr. Dorsey L. Kendrick for her outstanding leadership and invaluable contributions to our community as well as extend my very best wishes to her for many more years of health and happiness as she begins this next chapter of her life.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KEITH ELLISON

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, due to other commitments, I missed the following roll call votes. Had I been present, I would have voted as follows:

Roll Call No. 286, I would have voted yes,
Roll Call No. 287, I would have voted yes.

HONORING THE STAFF AND COMMUNITY AT GOOD OLD LOWER EAST SIDE

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the staff and community at Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES). Through tireless efforts, GOLES works to provide housing services for New York's most vulnerable residents. On the occasion of their 39th Annual Celebration, let us pause to say thank you for such life-changing work.

Founded in 1977, GOLES has seen the Lower East Side change through rapid gentrification. Facing a shifting landscape, many New Yorkers and small businesses have already lost or fear losing their homes.

GOLES actively works to meet the challenges of gentrification by offering tenant rights and eviction prevention counseling, successfully helping over 2,000 families avoid eviction each year.

By working directly with community members living in rent-regulated public housing, the staff at GOLES are committed to preserving affordable housing and diversity on the Lower East Side.

It is my honor to salute and thank GOLES for helping to keep New Yorkers in the places they call home. My sincerest wishes for a joyful and successful celebration and to many more years of groundbreaking work.

RECOGNIZING FIVE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS CHOSEN TO REPRESENT COLORADO AS DELEGATES AT THE CONGRESS FOR FUTURE MEDICAL LEADERS

HON. KEN BUCK

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize five high school students who were selected to represent the state of Colorado as delegates at the Congress for Future Medical Leaders. The students are Conor McDaniel, Mariah Pell, Robert Vanderschaaff, Keely Zeimet, and Hailey Archuleta.

The Congress of Future Medical Leaders is an honors program that recognizes exceptional high school students who are pursuing careers as a physician or in medical research.

These students are the future leaders of the medical field and our country. Through their studies, they have embodied the meaning of hard work and perseverance to achieve their goals, and will better the health of future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to recognize these students from the fourth district of Colorado for their hard work and service to our community. I wish them the best in their future endeavors.

FINANCIAL CHOICE ACT OF 2017

SPEECH OF

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 8, 2017

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 10) to create hope and opportunity for investors, consumers, and entrepreneurs by ending bailouts and Too Big to Fail, holding Washington and Wall Street accountable, eliminating red tape to increase access to capital and credit, and repealing the provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act that make America less prosperous, less stable, and less free, and for other purposes:

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Chair, in the 9 year's since the 2008 financial crisis, there's a consensus that the crisis was caused by too much risk and lax regulation. Because of banks' overinvestment in risky financial products, our country was plunged into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Housing prices, where middle-class Americans for decades have focused their investment, fell by more than 30 percent and an estimated 5.5 million more American jobs were lost to slow growth during the crisis. My hometown of Houston, Texas, was further hit by the sudden fall of oil prices in 2014 and the attendant layoffs and slowdown in the local economy, making it hard for my constituents to save, provide for their families, and plan for the future.

Seven years after Dodd-Frank was enacted, our country is just now beginning to recover. Dodd-Frank was put in place to make sure that the conditions that led to the crisis cannot occur again. If the hardship suffered by the

millions of Americans who saw the value of their home and their retirement funds disappear fails to convince my Republican colleagues of the need to make sure that banks cannot gamble with the money of middle-class Americans, it's difficult to imagine what would.

The CHOICE Act recreates the conditions that led to the 2008 crisis by allowing banks to again engage in risky investment behavior with their clients' money, and limiting oversight of banks by the federal government. If a key financial institution like the Lehmann Brothers, whose collapse contributed to the severity of the crisis in 2008, again collapses, the CHOICE Act then limits the ability of the government to intervene to guard against a total collapse of the financial system.

The assault that the CHOICE Act represents on the livelihood of middle and working class Americans isn't limited to this. Although consumer protection should be the most basic goal of all lawmakers, this bill subjugates consumer protection and welfare to the banking and finance industry in two additional ways. First, it will gut the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the agency created by Dodd-Frank and tasked with protecting Americans from irresponsible or predatory behavior by financial institutions. The CHOICE Act thus nearly eradicates the ability of the U.S. government to monitor the safety of financial products for everyday Americans, thus leaving a massive void in consumers' daily lives, as financial product offerings continue to expand and grow more and more complex and sometimes difficult to understand.

The Wrong CHOICE Act will also nullify the much-needed fiduciary rule, allowing investment advisors to make decisions with the money of their clients that aren't in their clients' best interest. This is shameful, and will allow bad apple investment advisors to take advantage of often elderly clients who, understandably, assume that those investment advisors will help them save for their retirement rather than put their own fees first.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle today to stand with our nation's retirees and working families and vote down this irresponsible bill.

RECOGNIZING JAKE HANSEN

HON. KEN BUCK

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Jake Hansen, owner and founder of Bricktree Customs.

Bricktree Customs, a custom LEGO Kit Company in Longmont, Colorado, was founded by Jake in 2015, at the young age of 16. He has created over a dozen carnival-themed custom LEGO kits to date, all of which he designed. Jake's kits are available at local toy stores in Longmont, as well as online in a global marketplace.

Entrepreneurs and small businesses are the backbone of our economy and communities. It is the ingenuity and hard work of Coloradans like Jake that make America a global leader. He has shown true creativity and innovation in his business and community.

On behalf of the 4th Congressional District of Colorado, I extend my best wishes to Jake as he pursues his future undertakings.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Mr. Jake Hansen for his accomplishments.

IN HONOR OF MICHAEL SMITH

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Michael A. Smith, an outstanding member of a special family in the Shenandoah Valley, whose generosity of time, energy, and money has made a significant difference in the lives of my Shenandoah Valley constituents. Mr. Smith recently received the President's Award of Shepherd University, in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, for his extraordinary service and contributions to that university.

With the passing of their father, Gerald F. Smith, in 2003, Michael and his brother, Gerald Smith, Jr. have led the family owned business, Valley Proteins, Inc., through a period of remarkable growth. Established in 1949 by their grandfather, Clyde A. Smith, as a one-

truck service for recycling waste meat byproducts and spent cooking oils, Valley Proteins is now one of the largest independent rendering companies in North America, operating 12 plants in seven states.

Although the Smith family enterprise has consumed most of the brothers' time, they have both given back to the community in significant ways. Michael has served as the President of the Winchester Youth Development Center, which provides recreational and enrichment opportunities for the youth of Winchester, the Vice President of the Virginia Community College Foundation, which raises funds to provide access to post-secondary education to all Virginians, the Treasurer and Annual Giving Chairman for Powhatan School, and the President of the Board of Directors of the Upperville Colt and Horse Show.

Since graduating from Shepherd University with a business degree in 1989, Michael Smith has also generously given of his time and money to his alma mater. Today, he is president of the Shepherd University Foundation, which receives and administers private gifts for student scholarships, academic and program support, faculty excellence awards and other university initiatives. In addition to starting two endowed funds in the name of his grandfather and father, Smith assisted with the university's efforts to create a school of business, by issuing a generous challenge grant which resulted in the raising of more than \$650,000 for the school.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and our colleagues join me in honoring Michael Smith, Vice President of Valley Proteins, Inc., for his special recognition from Shepherd University and his extraordinary contributions to the residents of the northern Shenandoah Valley and the people of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CARLOS CURBELO

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I missed votes on account of my flight being cancelled from MIA-DCA. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 300 and YEA on Roll Call No. 301.

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S3413–59

Measures Introduced: Six bills were introduced, as follows: S. 1343–1348. **Page S3456**

Measures Reported:

S. 55, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Fort Ontario in the State of New York, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. (S. Rept. No. 115–104)

S. 214, to authorize the expansion of an existing hydroelectric project. (S. Rept. No. 115–105)

S. 566, to withdraw certain land in Okanogan County, Washington, to protect the land. (S. Rept. No. 115–106)

S. 714, to amend Public Law 103–434 to authorize Phase III of the Yakima River Basin Water Basin Water Enhancement Project for the purposes of improving water management in the Yakima River basin. (S. Rept. No. 115–107) **Page S3456**

Measures Passed:

Police Officer Scott Bashioum Post Office Building: Senate passed S. 831, to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 120 West Pike Street in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, as the “Police Officer Scott Bashioum Post Office Building”. **Page S3459**

Measures Considered:

Government of Saudi Arabia Export of Defense Articles: By 47 yeas to 53 nays (Vote No. 143), Senate did not agree to the motion to discharge S.J. Res. 42, relating to the disapproval of the proposed export to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of certain defense articles. **Pages S3416–40**

Countering Iran’s Destabilizing Activities Act—Agreement: Senate continued consideration of S. 722, to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran’s ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, taking action on the following amendments and motions proposed thereto:

Pages S3440–51

Withdrawn:

McConnell Amendment No. 233 (to Amendment No. 232), to change the enactment date. **Page S3428**

Pending:

McConnell (for Crapo) Modified Amendment No. 232, to impose sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation and to combat terrorism and illicit financing. **Pages S3440–48**

A motion was entered to close further debate on the committee-reported substitute amendment to the bill, and, in accordance with the provisions of Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur on Thursday, June 15, 2017.

Page S3450

A motion was entered to close further debate on the bill, and, in accordance with the provisions of Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the committee-reported substitute amendment to the bill.

Page S3450

A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that the motion to invoke cloture on McConnell (for Crapo) Amendment No. 232 (listed above), be withdrawn.

Page S3450

A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that at 2 p.m., on Wednesday, June 14, 2017, Senate vote on adoption of McConnell (for Crapo) Modified Amendment No. 232 (listed above), with no intervening action or debate and no second-degree amendments in order prior to the vote; and that following Leader remarks on Wednesday, June 14, 2017, the time until 2 p.m. be equally divided in the usual form.

Page S3428

A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing for further consideration of the bill at approximately 10:45 a.m., on Wednesday, June 14, 2017.

Page S3459

Message from the President: Senate received the following message from the President of the United States:

Transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on the continuation of the national emergency that was originally declared in Executive Order 13405 of June

16, 2006, with respect to Belarus; which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. (PM–9) **Page S3452**

Messages from the House: **Pages S3452–53**

Measures Referred: **Page S3453**

Measures Placed on the Calendar: **Page S3453**

Executive Communications: **Pages S3453–55**

Petitions and Memorials: **Page S3455**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages S3456–57**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions:
Pages S3457–58

Amendments Submitted: **Pages S3458–59**

Authorities for Committees to Meet: **Page S3459**

Privileges of the Floor: **Page S3459**

Record Votes: One record vote was taken today. (Total—143) **Page S3428**

Adjournment: Senate convened at 10 a.m. and adjourned at 6:18 p.m., until 10:45 a.m. on Wednesday, June 14, 2017. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today's Record on page S3459.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

APPROPRIATIONS: DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2018 for the Department of Justice, after receiving testimony from Rod J. Rosenstein, Deputy Attorney General, Department of Justice.

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 2018 for the Department of Agriculture, after receiving testimony from Sonny Perdue, Secretary of Agriculture.

APPROPRIATIONS: DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2018 for the Department

of State, after receiving testimony from Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST AND FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Committee on Armed Services: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the Department of Defense budget posture in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2018 and the Future Years Defense Program, after receiving testimony from James N. Mattis, Secretary, General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and David L. Norquist, Under Secretary (Comptroller), all of the Department of Defense.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST AND FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on SeaPower concluded a hearing to examine Navy and Marine Corps aviation programs in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2018 and the Future Years Defense Program, after receiving testimony from Lieutenant General Jon M. Davis, USMC, Deputy Commandant for Aviation, United States Marine Corps, and Vice Admiral Paul A. Grosklags, USN, Commander, Naval Air Systems, and Rear Admiral DeWolfe H. Miller, III, USN, Director, Air Warfare (OPNAV N98), both of the Department of the Navy, all of the Department of Defense.

FY 2018 BUDGET AND REVENUE PROPOSALS

Committee on the Budget: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2018 and revenue proposals, after receiving testimony from Steven T. Mnuchin, Secretary of the Treasury.

NOMINATIONS

Committee on Environment and Public Works: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of Kristine L. Svinicki, and Annie Caputo, both of Virginia, and David Wright, of South Carolina, who was introduced by Senator Graham, each to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and Susan Parker Bodine, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE BUDGET

Committee on Foreign Relations: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2018 for the Department of State, after receiving testimony from Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State.

STATE-SPONSORED CYBERSPACE THREATS

Committee on Foreign Relations: Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy concluded a hearing to examine state-sponsored cyberspace threats, focusing on recent incidents and United States policy response, after receiving testimony from Samantha F. Ravich, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Washington, D.C.; and Eric Rosenbach, Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the cost of prescription drugs, focusing on how the drug delivery system affects what patients pay, after receiving testimony from Dan Mendelson, Avalere, and Allan Coukell, The Pew Charitable Trusts, both of Washington, D.C.; Paul Howard, Manhattan Institute, New York, New York; and Gerard Anderson, Johns Hopkins Center for Hospital Finance and Management, Baltimore, Maryland.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Indian Affairs: Committee ordered favorably reported the following business items:

S.772, to amend the PROTECT Act to make Indian tribes eligible for AMBER Alert grants; and

S.825, to provide for the conveyance of certain property to the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium located in Sitka, Alaska, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

INDIAN AFFAIRS LEGISLATION

Committee on Indian Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine S. 1250, to amend the Indian

Health Care Improvement Act to improve the recruitment and retention of employees in the Indian Health Service, restore accountability in the Indian Health Service, improve health services, S. 1275, to improve the housing conditions and promote useful land uses within tribal communities, and an original bill entitled, “HUD/VA Veterans Assisted Supplemental Housing”, after receiving testimony from Rear Admiral Chris Buchanan, Assistant Surgeon General, Public Health Service, Acting Director, Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services; Heidi Frechette, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Native American Programs, Department of Housing and Urban Development; Keith Harris, National Director of Clinical Operations, Homeless Program Office, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; Victoria Kitcheyan, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, Winnebago; Joseph P. Crowley, American Dental Association, Cincinnati, Ohio; Mark Charlie, The Association of Village Council Presidents Regional Housing Authority, Bethel, Alaska; and Max Stier, Partnership for Public Service, Liana Onnen, National Congress of American Indians, and Sami Jo Difuntorum, National American Indian Housing Council, all of Washington, D.C.

2016 ELECTION INTELLIGENCE MATTERS

Select Committee on Intelligence: Committee concluded a hearing to examine certain intelligence matters relating to the 2016 United States election, after receiving testimony from former Senator Jeff Sessions, Attorney General, Department of Justice.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 11 public bills, H.R. 2889–2899; and 2 resolutions, H. Res. 381, 383 were introduced. **Pages H4912–13**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages H4913–14**

Reports Filed: A report was filed today as follows:

H. Res. 382, providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1215) to improve patient access to health care services and provide improved medical care by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the health care delivery system (H. Rept. 115–179). **Page H4912**

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he appointed Representative Comer to act as Speaker pro tempore for today. **Page H4857**

Recess: The House recessed at 10:55 a.m. and reconvened at 12 noon. **Page H4865**

Journal: The House agreed to the Speaker’s approval of the Journal by a yea-and-nay vote of 238 yeas to 166 nays with two answering “present”, Roll No. 304. **Pages H4874–75**

Committee Chairman Resignation: Read a letter from Representative Chaffetz wherein he resigned as Chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. **Page H4867**

Committee Elections: The House agreed to H. Res. 381, electing Members to certain standing committees of the House of Representatives. **Page H4867**

Verify First Act: The House passed H.R. 2581, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require the provision of social security numbers as a condition of receiving the health insurance premium tax credit, by a recorded vote of 238 ayes to 184 noes, Roll No. 306. **Pages H4867–83**

Rejected the Sanchez motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Ways and Means with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with an amendment, by a yea-and-nay vote of 193 yeas to 231 nays, Roll No. 305. **Page H4883**

Pursuant to the Rule, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means now printed in the bill shall be considered as adopted. **Page H4875**

H. Res. 378, the rule providing for consideration of the bills (H.R. 2581) and (S. 1094) was agreed to by a recorded vote of 229 ayes to 190 noes, Roll No. 303, after the previous question was ordered by a yea-and-nay vote of 229 yeas to 189 nays, Roll No. 302. **Pages H4867–74**

Privileged Resolution—Intent to Offer: Representative Doggett announced his intent to offer a privileged resolution. **Pages H4898–99**

Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017: The House passed S. 1094, to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, by a yea-and-nay vote of 368 yeas to 55 nays, Roll No. 307. **Pages H4867–74**

H. Res. 378, the rule providing for consideration of the bills (H.R. 2581) and (S. 1094) was agreed to by a recorded vote of 229 ayes to 190 noes, Roll No. 303, after the previous question was ordered by a yea-and-nay vote of 229 yeas to 189 nays, Roll No. 302. **Pages H4872–74**

Presidential Message: Read a message from the President wherein he notified Congress that the national emergency declared with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine Belarus's democratic processes or institutions is to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2017—referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed (H. Doc. 115–47). **Page H4901**

Senate Message: Message received from the Senate by the Clerk and subsequently presented to the House today appears on page H4867.

Quorum Calls—Votes: Four yea-and-nay votes and two recorded votes developed during the proceedings

of today and appear on pages H4873, H4873–74, H4874, H4897–98, H4899. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 10 a.m. and adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

Committee Meetings

SMALL WATERSHED INFRASTRUCTURE: CONTINUING THE MISSION, BUILDING UPON SUCCESS

Committee on Agriculture: Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry held a hearing entitled “Small Watershed Infrastructure: Continuing the Mission, Building upon Success”. Testimony was heard from Jimmy Bramblett, Deputy Chief, Programs, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture; and public witnesses.

APPROPRIATIONS—CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION AND IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Homeland Security held a budget hearing on Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Testimony was heard from Thomas D. Homan, Acting Director, Immigration and Customs Enforcement; John P. Wagner, Deputy Executive Assistant Commissioner, Customs and Border Protection; and Carla L. Provost, Acting Chief, United States Border Patrol.

APPROPRIATIONS—DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies held a budget hearing on the Department of Justice. Testimony was heard from Rod Rosenstein, Deputy Attorney General.

PROMOTING SECURITY IN WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY

Committee on Energy and Commerce: Subcommittee on Communications and Technology held a hearing entitled “Promoting Security in Wireless Technology”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

DISRUPTER SERIES: UPDATE ON IOT OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Committee on Energy and Commerce: Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection held a hearing entitled “Disrupter Series: Update on IOT Opportunities and Challenges”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa held a hearing entitled “Challenges and Opportunities for the U.S.-Saudi Relationship”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

EXAMINING THE SUPREME COURT’S TC HEARTLAND DECISION

Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, and the Internet held a hearing entitled “Examining the Supreme Court’s TC Heartland Decision”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

LAWSUIT ABUSE AND THE TELEPHONE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice held a hearing entitled “Lawsuit Abuse and the Telephone Consumer Protection Act”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

THE FEDERAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION REFORM ACT (FITARA) SCORECARD 4.0

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform: Subcommittee on Information Technology; and Subcommittee on Government Operations held a joint hearing entitled “The Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA) Scorecard 4.0”. Testimony was heard from David A. Powner, Director, IT Management Issues, Government Accountability Office; Beth Killoran, Deputy Assistant Secretary for IT, Chief Information Officer, Department of Health and Human Services; Sheila Conley, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Acting Chief Financial Officer, Department of Health and Human Services; and a public witness.

PROTECTING ACCESS TO CARE ACT OF 2017

Committee on Rules: Full Committee held a hearing on H.R. 1215, the “Protecting Access to Care Act of 2017”. The Committee granted, by record vote of 7–3, a structured rule for H.R. 1215. The rule provides one hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. The rule makes in order as original text for purpose of amendment an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 115–10 and provides that it shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against that amendment in the nature of a

substitute. The rule makes in order only those further amendments printed in the Rules Committee report. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question. The rule waives all points of order against the amendments printed in the report. The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. Testimony was heard from Representatives King of Iowa, Cohen, Barr, Hudson, and Bucshon.

Joint Meetings

No joint committee meetings were held.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2017

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Department of Defense, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2018 for the Department of Defense, 10:30 a.m., SD–192.

Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2018 for the Senate Sergeant at Arms and the Capitol Police, 11 a.m., SD–124.

Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2018 for the National Nuclear Security Administration, 2:30 p.m., SD–138.

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: business meeting to consider the nominations of Kevin Allen Hassett, of Massachusetts, to be Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, and Pamela Hughes Patenaude, of New Hampshire, to be Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, 2:15 p.m., S–216, Capitol.

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: to hold hearings to examine paving the way for self-driving vehicles, 10 a.m., SR–253.

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Water and Power, to hold hearings to examine S. 440, to establish a procedure for the conveyance of certain Federal property around the Dickinson Reservoir in the State of North Dakota, S. 677, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to coordinate Federal and State permitting processes related to the construction of new surface water storage projects on lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture and to designate the Bureau of Reclamation as the lead agency for permit processing, S. 685, to authorize the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority System and the Musselshell-Judith Rural Water System in the States of

Montana and North Dakota, S. 930, to require the Administrator of the Western Area Power Administration to establish a pilot project to provide increased transparency for customers, S. 1012, to provide for drought preparedness measures in the State of New Mexico, S. 1029, to amend the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 to exempt certain small hydroelectric power projects that are applying for relicensing under the Federal Power Act from the licensing requirements of that Act, and S. 1030, to require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to submit to Congress a report on certain hydropower projects, 2 p.m., SD-366.

Committee on Environment and Public Works: to hold hearings to examine S. 517, to amend the Clean Air Act with respect to the ethanol waiver for Reid vapor pressure limitations under such Act, 10 a.m., SD-406.

Committee on Finance: business meeting to consider the nominations of Eric D. Hargan, of Illinois, to be Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services, and David Malpass, of New York, to be an Under Secretary, Andrew K. Maloney, of Virginia, to be a Deputy Under Secretary, and Brent James McIntosh, of Michigan, to be General Counsel, all of the Department of the Treasury, 10 a.m., SD-215.

Committee on Foreign Relations: Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation, to hold hearings to examine southeast Europe, focusing on strengthening democracy and countering malign foreign influence, 2:30 p.m., SD-419.

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: to hold hearings to examine ideology and terror, focusing on understanding the tools, tactics, and techniques of violent extremism, 10 a.m., SD-342.

Committee on the Judiciary: to hold hearings to examine the nominations of John Kenneth Bush, of Kentucky, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit, Kevin Christopher Newsom, of Alabama, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit, and Damien Michael Schiff, of California, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims, 9:45 a.m., SD-226.

Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship: to hold hearings to examine tax reform, focusing on removing barriers to small business growth, 3 p.m., SR-428A.

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: to hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2018 for veterans' programs and fiscal year 2019 advance appropriations requests, 2:30 p.m., SR-418.

Special Committee on Aging: to hold hearings to examine military caregivers, focusing on families serving for the long run, 2:30 p.m., SD-106.

House

Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, budget hearing on the Department of the Treasury—International Programs, 10 a.m., 2359 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, budget hearing on the Department of State, 2 p.m., 2359 Rayburn.

Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, hearing entitled "Legislative Reforms to the National Labor Relations Act: H.R. 2776, Workforce Democracy and Fairness Act; H.R. 2775, Employee Privacy Protection Act; and H.R. 2723, Employee Rights Act", 10:15 a.m., 2175 Rayburn.

Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Energy, hearing entitled "States' Perspectives on Energy Security Planning, Emergency Preparedness, and State Energy Programs", 10 a.m., 2123 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Health, hearing entitled "Examining the Extension of Safety Net Health Programs", 10:15 a.m., 2322 Rayburn.

Committee on Financial Services, Full Committee, markup on H.R. 1422, the "Flood Insurance Market Parity and Modernization Act"; H.R. 1558, the "Repeatedly Flooded Communities Preparation Act"; H.R. 2246, the "Taxpayer Exposure Mitigation Act of 2017"; H.R. 2565, to require the use of replacement cost value in determining the premium rates for flood insurance coverage under the National Flood Insurance Act, and for other purposes; H.R. 2868, the "National Flood Insurance Program Policyholder Protection Act of 2017"; H.R. 2875, the "National Flood Insurance Program Administrative Reform Act of 2017"; and H.R. 2874, the "21st Century Flood Reform Act", 10 a.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, Full Committee, hearing entitled "The FY 2018 Foreign Affairs Budget", 9 a.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, markup on H.R. 1415, the "End Neglected Tropical Diseases Act", 2 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, hearing entitled "Africa's Current and Potential Famines", 2:15 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Committee on Homeland Security, Full Committee, markup on H.R. 2825, the "Department of Homeland Security Authorization Act of 2017", 11 a.m., HVC-210.

Committee on the Judiciary, Full Committee, markup on H.J. Res. 76, granting the consent and approval of Congress for the Commonwealth of Virginia, the State of Maryland, and the District of Columbia to enter into a compact relating to the establishment of the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission; H.J. Res. 92, granting the consent and approval of Congress for the Commonwealth of Virginia, the State of Maryland, and the District of Columbia to amend the Washington Area Transit Regulation Compact; H.R. 495, the "Protection of Children Act of 2017"; and H.R. 2826, the "Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act of 2017", 10 a.m., 2141 Rayburn.

Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Federal Lands, hearing on a legislative measure to provide for the preservation of sportsmen's heritage and enhance recreation opportunities on Federal land, and for other purposes, 10 a.m., 1324 Longworth.

Committee on Small Business, Full Committee, hearing entitled “A Cautionary Tale: A Review of SBA’s Failed FY 2014 Agency Restructure”, 11 a.m., 2360 Rayburn.

Committee on Ways and Means, Full Committee, markup on H.R. 2742, the “Modernizing the Interstate Placement of Children in Foster Care Act”; H.R. 2857, the “Supporting Families in Substance Abuse Treatment Act”; H.R. 2834, the “Partnership Grants to Strengthen Families Affected by Parental Substance Abuse Act”; H.R. 2866, the “Reducing Barriers for Relative Foster Parents Act”; H.R. 2847, the “Improving Services for Older Youth in Foster Care Act”; H.R. 2842, the “Accel-

erating Individuals into the Workforce Act”, 10 a.m., 1100 Longworth.

Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Subcommittee on Department of Defense Intelligence and Overhead Architecture, hearing entitled “Ongoing Intelligence Activities: FY 18 Budget Request”, 10 a.m., HVC-304. This hearing will be closed.

Joint Meetings

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe: to hold hearings to examine the Romanian anti-corruption process, focusing on successes and excesses, 9:30 a.m., SVC-212-210.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

10:45 a.m., Wednesday, June 14

Senate Chamber

Program for Wednesday: Senate will continue consideration of S. 722, Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act, and vote on or in relation to McConnell (for Crapo) Modified Amendment No. 232, at 2 p.m.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

10 a.m., Wednesday, June 14

House Chamber

Program for Wednesday: Consideration of H.R. 2372—Veterans Equal Treatment Ensures Relief and Access Now Act (Subject to a Rule). Begin consideration of H.R. 2579—Broader Options for Americans Act (Subject to a Rule).

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