

This, he took to heart. In his early years of church service, President Monson presided over a congregation with 85 widows. Although he was their appointed church leader for just a few short years, the love he felt for those widows was evident. He continued to visit each widow throughout her remaining life and was present at the funeral for each of his dear friends.

He encouraged all of us to “extend the hand that helps and the heart that knows compassion.” My colleagues here would be interested to know that President Monson often quoted Abraham Lincoln saying: “If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend.”

President Monson’s example of service and rescue was recognized by many world leaders. In an effort to promote America’s spirit of generosity, President Ronald Reagan appointed him to his Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives. President Monson met with religious leaders of all faiths to talk about the welfare program of the church, which has been recognized as being highly successful in its scope and in its mission.

In closing, President Monson’s daughter, Ann Monson Dibb, observed how her father embodied the Scripture in James that reads: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” There is no better description of the life and legacy of Thomas S. Monson. May we do the same by rushing to the rescue of those in need.

I yield the floor.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### RESCINDING THE COLE MEMORANDUM

Mr. GARDNER. Madam President, up until about 8:58 this morning, we believed in Colorado that States rights would be protected. Up until about 8:58, maybe 8:55—until Twitter told us otherwise—we believed the will of Colorado voters would be respected. Why did we believe that? Because of conversations I had with then-Senator Jeff Sessions prior to his confirmation as Attorney General about what would happen with Colorado’s marijuana policy.

At the time, prior to his confirmation, then-Senator Sessions told me there were no plans to reverse the Cole memorandum. Then-Senator Sessions told me marijuana simply wasn’t going to be on President Trump’s agenda; that it was something they weren’t going to deal with; it was something President Trump simply wasn’t going to focus on.

That was back in the spring of 2016, and up until 8:58 this morning, that was the policy. One tweet later, one policy later—a complete reversal of what many of us on the Hill were told before the confirmation and what we had continued to believe the last year. Then, without any notification, conversation, or dialogue with Congress, completely reversed.

Now, perhaps the Department of Justice didn’t think this would be a big deal. I understand Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ opposition to the legalization of marijuana. I opposed the legalization of marijuana in Colorado, but this is about a decision by the State of Colorado. We were told that States rights would be protected and not just by the Attorney General, then the nominee to be Attorney General, we were told that by then-Candidate Donald Trump.

In Colorado, in July of 2016, then-Candidate Trump was asked if he would use Federal authority to shut down sales of recreational marijuana in States like Colorado. Then-Candidate Donald Trump said: “I wouldn’t do that.”

When then-Candidate Trump was asked if he thought Colorado should be allowed to do what it is doing, he said: “It’s up to the States. Absolutely.”

That was then-Candidate Trump’s position. I would like to know from the Attorney General what has changed. What has changed President Trump’s mind that the Cole memorandum would be reversed and rescinded? What has changed the President’s mind? Why is Donald Trump thinking differently today about what he promised the people of Colorado in 2016 to reverse course today? What changed? I would like to know that. I think the people of Colorado deserve to have that answer.

Without the Cole memorandum, legal businesses, operating in accordance with States rights and laws, are now operating under a cloud of uncertainty. Thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue are at risk, and certainly the question of constitutional States rights is very much at the core of this discussion. I believe what happened today was a trampling of Colorado’s rights and its voters. Sure, this was a heavily debated issue, something I have already said I opposed, but the people of Colorado spoke, and they spoke loudly, and I believe that if the same question were asked today, they would even have more support for the decision they made several years ago.

I agree with President Trump that this decision should be left up to the people of Colorado and other States, and I call on Attorney General Jeff Sessions to explain to me why President Trump was wrong in 2016, what changed their minds, and that they reverse their decision to withdraw and rescind the Cole memorandum and that they reimplement and reinstate the Cole memorandum. Until that happens, I think I am obligated to the people of Colorado to take all steps necessary to

protect the State of Colorado and their rights.

That is why today I will be putting a hold on every single nomination from the Department of Justice until Attorney General Jeff Sessions lives up to the commitment he made to me in my preconfirmation meeting with him—the conversation we had that was specifically about this issue of States rights in Colorado. Until he lives up to that commitment, I will be holding all nominations to the Department of Justice.

The people of Colorado deserve answers. The people of Colorado deserve their will to be respected.

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

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

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for as much time as I need to complete my remarks.

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

#### FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, despite Donald Trump’s assertion last May that “our country needs a good shutdown,” the truth is, shutting down the government is a serious and dangerous action that we must do everything possible to prevent.

Shutting down the government would impact tens of millions of our fellow Americans who would be unable to access government services. It would severely impact Federal employees who would not get the paychecks they expected. It would also have a very significant impact on our Armed Forces. In other words, we must do everything we can to prevent a government shutdown, which is exactly what will happen if a budget agreement is not reached by January 19, when the short-term continuing resolution expires.

I am very disappointed, therefore, that the Republican Party, which controls the White House, the U.S. House, and the U.S. Senate, is pushing us closer and closer to a very dangerous government shutdown. The Republican leadership in Congress and the White House must not allow this shutdown to take place. They have to compromise. They cannot get it all.

As everyone knows, in 2011, Congress passed the Budget Control Act. The centerpiece of that bipartisan legislation was that there would be parity in defense and nondefense spending. That agreement continued in the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013, and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015. All of these bills provided equal amounts of funding for defense and nondefense purposes. Any future effort to increase the Budget Control Act caps must continue to

adhere to this principle of parity. In other words, we have had a bipartisan agreement now for 6 years that has continued on four separate budgets. But now, threatening us with a government shutdown, the Republicans want to break that agreement.

I was very disturbed to hear Senate Majority Leader MCCONNELL on the floor yesterday say:

Since fiscal year 2013, defense cuts have outpaced domestic spending cuts by \$85 billion. To fix this, we need to set aside the arbitrary notion that defense spending be matched equally by new nondefense spending. There is no reason why funding for our national security and our servicemembers should be limited by an arbitrary political formula that bears no relationship to actual need.

That was Senator MCCONNELL on the floor yesterday.

Unfortunately, what Senator MCCONNELL said was inaccurate and misleading. His statement conveniently ignored the fact that mandatory spending on domestic programs like Medicare have been severely cut over this time period. He also ignored the fact that during this period, the Defense Department has also received tens and tens of billions of dollars in funding through the Overseas Contingency Operations funding, which is not capped at all.

If you include the Overseas Contingency Operations funding, the reality is that overall defense spending has gone up, not down, over this time period, while nondefense discretionary spending has been severely cut.

Further, Senator MCCONNELL ignores a very, very important reality; that is, nondefense discretionary spending as a percentage of GDP is now at a 40-year low. This longstanding agreement regarding parity for defense and non-defense spending is not some kind of inside-the-beltway, esoteric issue. It is an issue that will impact tens of millions of working families in this country who, today, are struggling to keep their heads above water.

Over the last 40 years, while the middle class of our country has been shrinking, the people on top—the top 1 percent—have been doing phenomenally well. The actions of the Republican Congress in the last year have only made a bad situation, an unfair situation, even worse. In the United States today, some 28 million Americans have no health insurance. Yet, over the last year, the Republicans have attempted to throw an additional 32 million people off of the healthcare they have, including proposed cuts for Medicaid by up to \$1 trillion over a 10-year period.

Tragically, the United States has the highest rate of childhood poverty of nearly any major country in the industrialized world. Instead of doing all that we can to end childhood poverty in this country, the Republicans have proposed to once again make a horrific situation even worse by cutting nutrition programs for children, cutting the WIC Program for low-income pregnant

women, cutting the Head Start Program, after-school programs, and funding for public education.

There are millions of senior citizens in this country who can barely make it, and I sometimes wonder how in God's Name they do make it on \$12,000, \$13,000, \$14,000 a year in Social Security. How do you keep your house warm, how do you buy the food you need, how do you buy the prescription drugs you need to stay alive on \$13,000 or \$14,000 a year? There are millions of senior citizens in this country in that position. Yet, despite that reality, over the last year we have had to fight off one Republican effort after another to cut Social Security COLAs, to raise the retirement age, or to even privatize this life-or-death program.

Further, the Republicans have proposed massive cuts to LIHEAP, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which is keeping people warm in Vermont today when the weather goes below zero. All over this country, millions of people, often senior citizens, depend on this program. Yet President Trump, in his budget, proposes to wipe it out completely. Republican leaders are also proposing cuts to the Meals on Wheels program, senior housing programs, and Medicare.

Today, in a highly competitive global economy, when we need to have the best educated workforce in the world, when the new jobs that are being created require a higher education, hundreds of thousands of bright young students desperately want to get a college education, but they are unable to do so because their families lack the income. But Republicans, incredibly, want to make that situation even worse by proposing massive cuts in the budget they recently passed to Pell grants—the major source of funding to help low-income young people get a college education—and other financial assistance programs for college. In my view, we should be making public colleges and universities tuition-free. Republicans today are proposing to make it harder for our young people to get the higher education they need.

During this budget process, when the Republicans want to expand military spending by some \$100 billion—\$100 billion—over the next 2 years, by far the largest increase in military spending in American history, we will not turn our backs on working families, the elderly, the children, the sick, and the poor. The U.S. Government must do more than greatly expand military spending and give tax breaks to billionaires. Our job is to protect the working families of this country, and that is what the new budget must do. That means we must have parity between defense and nondefense spending. That is why this budget—the proposed budget—that we are working on now must address the many crises facing the working families of the United States. That is what the American people want, and that is what we must deliver. Among many

other things that must be included in the new budget that we are working on is full funding for community health centers, which provides primary healthcare, dental care, mental health counseling, and low-cost prescription drugs to some 27 million Americans in every State in our country. It has been more than 3 months since funding for community health centers has lapsed. Our Nation's 1,400 community health centers in roughly 10,000 communities throughout this country are deeply worried right now as to when they will get the funding they need.

I just spoke to the leadership of community health centers in Vermont the other day. They have had a long-standing problem—as have community health centers all across this country—in retention and attracting new doctors and nurses into their programs. What we are seeing now is a situation where many people who might want to work at a community health center are saying: Why would I want to go there when the Republicans are delaying funding for this vitally important program?

If we do not act soon, 70 percent of the funding for community health centers will be cut and 2,800 health centers will close their doors. Community health centers must be funded at the levels contained in the bipartisan legislation introduced earlier this year. I congratulate Senator BLUNT and Senator STABENOW for their bipartisan work on this issue, and there are a number of other Republicans who are cosponsoring that legislation. We could pass it tomorrow if it were on the floor of the Senate. Let us do that.

The offsets to the prevention program of the Affordable Care Act that were included in the December 21 agreement are unacceptable, and they must not be repeated. The Blunt-Stabenow bill has nine Republican cosponsors. This bill represents a modest 5-percent increase in funding at a cost of just \$2 billion over 5 years—the very least we can do to address the major crisis of primary healthcare in America, especially in rural America.

As you know, Federal funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program expired on September 30, 2017. If the CHIP program is not reauthorized, 9 million children in working families will lose their health insurance. Can you imagine that we have a Congress prepared and acting to give tax breaks to the richest people in this country, but somehow or another they have not gotten around to reauthorize and refund the Children's Health Insurance Program? That must be done immediately and, once again, without regressive offsets which take money from other health insurance programs.

We must keep our promises on pensions. If Congress does not act soon, the earned pension benefits of more than 1.5 million workers and retirees in multi-employer pension plans could be cut by up to 60 percent. We must not rescind the promise we made to 1.5 million workers.

We must expand Social Security services for seniors. Since 2010, Congress has cut Social Security's operating budget by 16 percent, and Republicans want to cut it another 4 percent this year. These budget cuts have resulted in the loss of more than 10,000 employees, the closing of 64 field offices, and reduced hours in many others. In Vermont, one field office has seen its staffing cut by 30 percent. According to a recent Washington Post article, 10,000 people died in the past year while they waited for decisions on Social Security disability benefits. We need to increase the funding for these vital services by at least \$1.4 billion just to bring staffing back up to where it was in 2010.

We need to keep our promises to our veterans, the men and women who put their lives on the line to defend our country. Right now, we have tens of thousands of vacancies in the VA. Those vacancies must be filled. Veterans must be able to get high-quality, timely healthcare.

We must fight the opioid and heroin epidemic that is sweeping this country. All over America, we are seeing tens of thousands of people, often young people, overdosing on opioids and heroin. States and communities all over this country need the resources for prevention and treatment. That is an issue that cannot be delayed. It has to be dealt with now.

Everybody knows that in the last several months, we have seen disastrous hurricanes impact Texas and Florida and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. In Puerto Rico today, there continue to be many people who still do not have electricity. We must pass disaster relief right now that is adequate and that treats Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands just as we will treat Texas and Florida. We cannot continue to delay given the enormous suffering that is existing in Puerto Rico and in the Virgin Islands.

Very briefly, let me touch on another issue of enormous consequence which simply cannot be ignored. On September 5, 2017, President Trump announced that he would be rescinding President Obama's Executive order on DACA. That decision means that some 800,000 young people who have known the United States of America as their only home—this is where they grew up; this is where they went to school—are on the verge of losing their legal status in terms of education, in terms of employment, and in terms of serving in the military if that program is not reestablished. Without the legal protections afforded by the DACA Program, these young people live in a constant fear of being deported. Since the President's announcement in September, more than 11,000 people have lost the protections under DACA, with there being approximately 22,000 set to lose their legal protections by the March 5, 2018, deadline.

Any spending agreement must address the fear and uncertainty that has

been unnecessarily caused by the administration's reckless actions, and a clean Dream Act must be signed into law as part of the budget negotiations. Protecting the Dreamers and moving these young people toward citizenship is not some kind of wild and radical idea; it is precisely what the American people want. A recent Quinnipiac poll showed that 77 percent of the American people support providing legal protections to the Dreamers. This is an issue that must be dealt with, and it must be dealt with now.

When history looks back on this period, I do not want it to see a U.S. Congress that worked overtime to protect billionaires and large corporations and a Congress that turned its back on working families and the children and the sick and the poor. I do not want history to look back on this period and say that Members of Congress thought it appropriate to spend \$100 billion more on the military but were not concerned about veterans who did not get the healthcare they needed or some 800,000 young people who are now frightened that they will lose their legal status.

As the U.S. Senate, we must get our priorities right, and we need a budget that deals not only with military spending but with the needs of the middle class and working families of this country.

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 12:52 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. LEE).

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

#### IRAN

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today as brave citizens in Iran are taking to the streets to exercise their fundamental right to freely express their opinions and protest against their government.

As a democracy founded on core values, including the freedom of speech, equal rights under the law, and basic human dignity, the United States must always stand up for those peacefully advocating for these principles. For decades America has championed these principles, not only because they are right but because they promote our interests. We know that nations whose governments respect human rights and freedom of expression, that uphold the rule of law, and that protect the civil rights and liberties of their people serve as America's most reliable allies, most strategic security relationships, and most prosperous economic partners. Our enduring belief in democratic

values compels all of us to stand up, not as Democrats or Republicans but as Americans, and to support citizens around the world courageously protesting the regimes that oppress them.

We stand with those who speak out, and even risk their own lives, to make their voices heard in the struggle against oppression, inequality, and injustice. The fact that today's protests in Iran are against a regime that engages in activity that directly threatens our Nation, our allies, and our security interests is a separate matter.

Iran's leaders may try to blame the protests on outside forces, but in reality this unrest is homegrown. The Iranians marching in Tehran know exactly who is to blame for the hardship, inequality, and oppression they face in their daily lives. It is the regime itself. For those who have closely followed the developments in Iran for years, it is no surprise to learn that the regime continues to disregard the basic rights of its citizens. The regime has proven that it has no moral qualms with forcing the innocent to suffer. Already security forces are responsible for the deaths of more than 20 Iranian protesters. They have detained and imprisoned hundreds of people who are simply speaking their minds.

Of course, these abuses are just one example of the consistently odious behavior we have witnessed from Iran in recent years. This is a regime that has proven that it is more interested in building ballistic missiles than building bridges, that believes money is better spent on terrorist networks in Lebanon and Syria than on schools and hospitals for the Iranian people, that any revenue generated by Iran's international energy deals go directly into the pockets of those fomenting discord in the region and not into the hands of Iranian citizens trying to feed their families, and that will continue to engage in malign activity that isolates it from the community of nations, directly at the expense of the Iranian people. For these reasons and many more, I sincerely hope that the international community lives up to its responsibility to support all those who are protesting this repressive regime.

However, words go only so far. The United States must continue to lead international efforts to counter the Iranian regime's destabilizing behavior overseas. Unfortunately, this administration has yet to take the lead. We hear plenty of bluster from this President, but threatening tweets do not constitute policy nor can they hold Iran culpable. Putting a nation "on notice" means nothing if there are no policies put in place. We need a real strategy that addresses Iran's destabilizing activities in the Middle East, whether it is the regime's continued support for terrorist networks, illegal ballistic missile development, or human rights abuses and political interference in other countries.

These threats are what compelled me to work with my colleagues across the