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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, the source of all our praise, we magnify Your Name. We place our trust in You, for You are our helper throughout life's seasons.

Be mindful of our Senators and bless them. Keep them on the path that leads to life. May Your peace stay with them, guarding their hearts and minds.

Lord, give them the wisdom to practice integrity in all of their conduct. Keep them from stumbling and slipping as You prepare them to stand before Your presence with great joy.

We pray in Your merciful 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. STRANGE). The majority leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the cloture vote on the Branstad nomination, the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 56 and 57.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc

with no intervening action or debate; that, if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE INTERNET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I don't have to tell colleagues how important the internet and other wireless technologies have been in our modern society. From the way students learn to the way we do business and even the way we as Senators keep in touch with our constituents, these advancements have in many ways fundamentally changed how we operate. It is important to remember that these groundbreaking technological advances didn't just come about because of government mandates or heavy-handed bureaucracy; they grew out of an environment that allowed for, and actually encouraged, innovation.

From the Clinton years onward, there was a bipartisan consensus that we should maintain the kind of light regulatory touch that allows this innovation to thrive in the first place in order to open the door to further advancements.

Unfortunately, that changed under the Obama administration, which used the FCC to force through antiquated regulations designed for an age of rotary phones and switchboards. Today, however, we finally have an FCC chairman who recognizes that we live in an entirely new era—an era of smartphones and laptops and other mobile devices. We have a chairman who believes that innovation, ingenuity, growth, and job creation aren't dirty words to be stifled with unnecessary redtape.

Today, it is expected that Chairman Pai and Commissioner O'Rielly will take the first necessary step to address a deeply flawed Obama-era diktat that empowered bureaucrats with vast new powers to control the internet through archaic rotary telephone regulations from nearly a century ago. No matter how well intended, this overreach threatened the very innovation that brought us the internet and other technological advancements in the first place.

I want to commend Chairman Pai for taking this preliminary step to address the issue, which will also open the door for bipartisan congressional action to keep the internet open for consumers permanently. Later today, Senator THUNE and others will come to the floor to talk more about this issue. I look forward to hearing what they have to say and thank them for continuing this important conversation.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, too many Americans woke up this morning worried about the rising costs and limited options they are experiencing under ObamaCare. As they went to work, too many struggled with the reality that their ObamaCare premiums could take an even larger bite out of their paycheck next year.

This afternoon, as they pick up their kids, too many will worry that they may have a hard time finding an ObamaCare plan at all for next year, with many counties having only one option left on the exchanges. Unfortunately, these are the realities for far too many Americans under ObamaCare, and they are miles away from what Democrats promised.

In my home State, we endured large premium hikes this year of up to 47 percent. For many working families, a spike in premiums like that can make it nearly impossible to afford health

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



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insurance at all. To make matters worse, under ObamaCare, many Kentuckians don't have the option to select the best provider for themselves and their families.

Let's take a look at the chart behind me. In Kentucky, under ObamaCare, 49 percent of our counties—49 percent—have one insurer, one. For Kentuckians in half of our counties, half have one choice. Really, when you have one choice, you have no choice at all.

It is not as though this situation is unique to my State either. This year, there are 26 States with at least one county where residents have only a single insurance option under ObamaCare. That means millions of Americans living in more than 1,000 counties across the country really have no choice at all—no choice at all—when it comes to ObamaCare.

Those families didn't get the increased choices they were promised under that law. They have been left to shoulder the burden nonetheless, and things have only gotten worse over time.

In fact, just this week, people on the ObamaCare exchanges in three more States—Vermont, Virginia, and Oregon—learned they could face double-digit premium increases as high as 20 percent next year. I would ask our Democratic friends, are they really OK—are you really OK with ObamaCare's continuing attacks on the middle class?

One constituent from Lexington in my State wrote me about her frustration with the status quo under ObamaCare. Here is what she had to say:

My insurance is way more than what I can afford. I can't imagine many others who can pay more for health insurance than their mortgage.

She and her husband had shopped on the exchanges for healthcare, but the lowest premium options were around \$1,000 a month—listen to this—\$1,000 a month, and that got them a \$10,000 deductible; \$1,000 a month would only get a policy with a \$10,000 deductible. So they decided to go uninsured and pay the penalty. She said:

The cost will be minor compared to the useless premium cost.

The last part of this Kentucky woman's message is something I think we should all remember throughout this debate. She said:

Please remember that there are many people depending on Congress to set this . . . right.

Americans like her are counting on all of us to leave ObamaCare's failures where they belong—in the past. For years, they have suffered under a collapsing system. Yet our friends across the aisle continued to defend the broken law regardless of its significant problems—problems that even many of them have, by the way, started to acknowledge.

Last week, Senate Democrats sent me a letter effectively admitting that the ObamaCare status quo is

unsustainable. I hope that means they are prepared to join us in moving beyond their failed law. Otherwise, Senate Democrats are essentially telling the American people that they are OK with the status quo and that ObamaCare's collapsing markets, double-digit premium increases, and counties with only one insurer represent the new normal for healthcare in our country. Surely, they are not comfortable with that.

My constituents refuse to accept the status quo. The only question that really remains is this: Will Senate Democrats work with us to move beyond the status quo?

The entire Senate Republican Conference has been at work debating ideas and making progress. We are pursuing smarter healthcare policies for Kentuckians like the couple in Lexington and the millions more like them across the Nation who know that ObamaCare just isn't working. I hope our friends on the other side of the aisle will agree to join us in bringing some relief to all of these families who desperately need it.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appointed former FBI Director Robert Mueller as a special counsel to oversee the investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 elections.

This was a very good first step. Mr. Rosenstein has done the right thing. I applaud his decision for both its correctness and its courage. A special counsel was much called for in this situation. Former Director Mueller is the right kind of individual for the job. I now have significantly greater confidence that the investigation will follow the facts wherever they lead. Additionally, as special counsel, Mr. Mueller must have broad latitude to pursue the Russia investigation. In the appointment order, it stipulates that the special counsel is authorized to investigate "any matters that arose or may arise directly from this investigation." That is a really important power, given recent reports about an active FBI investigation into General Flynn.

I am heartened by the news of Mr. Mueller's appointment, but it in no

way diminishes the need for Congress to play an active role in helping to get to the bottom of recent events. Intelligence Committee Chairman BARR and Ranking Member WARNER should still pursue the congressional investigation into these matters with just as much vigor. That investigation has been proceeding in a bipartisan way, and it absolutely should continue as such.

We should still seek testimony from Mr. Comey in both the Judiciary and Intelligence Committees to discuss the events surrounding his dismissal and be given access to memos and transcripts or tapes of his conversations with President Trump. Mr. Comey was central to the events of the past few weeks. We still need to hear from him. I thank the bipartisan leadership of both the Intelligence and Judiciary Committees for requesting both the records and public testimony of Director Comey.

Congress, specifically the Judiciary and Intelligence Committees, should still be given access to any transcripts or related summaries of the President's meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister and Ambassador, during which reports have alleged he may have divulged highly sensitive intelligence.

Finally, there is still a great need as before for the next FBI Director to be someone who is nonpartisan, independent, fearless, and of unimpeachable integrity. A career politician of either party or anyone who suggests a lack of impartiality, should not be considered. The appointment of Mr. Mueller is a great first step toward getting the Russia investigation back on solid ground, but these other things also need to happen: Mr. Comey testifying; the White House turning over to Congress the relevant tapes and transcripts, if they exist; and the selection of an independent, impartial FBI Director.

Later this afternoon, the Deputy Attorney General, Rod Rosenstein, will brief all 100 Senators at the request of the two leaders, the majority leader and myself. He can brief us on a great many things, including the events of Mr. Comey's dismissal and the status of the Russia investigation.

While the briefing itself will not take place in a public setting, I hope that much of what we learn today can be shared with the American public.

So in the interest of getting all the facts, we in Congress look forward to hearing from Mr. Rosenstein this afternoon. It is a sign that while we wholeheartedly applaud the appointment of a special counsel, we in Congress must continue to do our jobs as well.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, on another matter, Mr. President, criminal justice reform. Last week, Attorney General Jeff Sessions ordered Federal prosecutors to "charge and pursue the most serious readily provable offense," even for low-level drug crimes. Functionally, this means Federal prosecutors

will seek the harshest possible penalty even for nonviolent, low-level drug crimes.

This is a significant reversal from the Obama-era Smart on Crime Initiative, in which Federal prosecutors were instructed to focus on more dangerous drug traffickers and avoid charging less-serious offenders with crimes that required long, mandatory minimum sentences. As a result of the Obama policies, Federal drug cases dropped by more than 19 percent between 2012 and 2016, according to the U.S. Sentencing Commission. Cases with charges carrying longer, mandatory minimum sentences fell precipitously, from nearly 60 percent in 2012 to 45 percent last year. Thanks in part to this initiative, President Obama became the first President since Carter to leave the White House with a smaller Federal prison population than when he took office.

Meanwhile, prosecutions of the more serious crimes—the evil drug dealers, those who run the drugs, often from out of this country to here, they are the ones we can really go after and need to go after—increased by 17 percent and 14 percent, which makes it the way we can stop these evil drugs from coming into this country.

So that policy was tough on crime and smart on crime. Our law enforcement agencies have finite resources. They should be focused on combating violent crimes. When a prosecutor is spending hours in court, days, for a low-level possession charge and not having the resources to go after the drug runners, the drug dealers who poison our kids, that is misplaced priorities.

What Attorney General Sessions has just ordered is the exact opposite approach of what we need. Instead of giving judges and juries the discretion to use their judgment in sentencing, it compels prosecutors to seek as much jail time as they can get for every single offense, treating low level and high level the same. It is a blunt instrument that will result in more unnecessary, punitive sentences, overcrowding of our prisons, and will be less effective in our fight on crime. It runs completely counter to a bipartisan consensus here in Congress.

Many Members of this body, Democrats and Republicans, agree that mandatory minimum sentences have led to bloated, costly prisons, and disproportionately ravaged minority communities.

In the last Congress, a bipartisan group of Senators sought to make meaningful progress with a sentencing reform proposal that had, among its cosponsors, a diverse group of Senators, ranging from Senators DURBIN and BOOKER on the Democratic side to Senators LEE and PAUL on the conservative side. Unfortunately, those efforts to strike a compromise to bring much needed reform to our Nation's criminal justice system were derailed by the obstruction of, guess who—then-Senator

Sessions, with the cooperation of the Republican leadership. Now, after making progress under President Obama and Attorney General Holder, Attorney General Sessions has chosen to simply revert back to the one-size-fits-all approach that criminologists, police leaders, and bipartisan lawmakers have determined is not the right answer.

In order to truly be tough on crime, we must be smart on crime. This approach is dumb on crime. Congress, of course, still has the power to legislate this issue. We have the power to override the Attorney General's decision. So I hope this misguided change in the Department of Justice's policy revives a bipartisan desire to pursue sentencing reform. When we look for areas where there can be significant bipartisan cooperation, this is one of them. I hope Leader MCCONNELL will choose to pursue it.

Thank you, Mr. President.
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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Brand nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Rachel L. Brand, of Iowa, to be Associate Attorney General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Connecticut.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I am on the floor to talk about the status of America's healthcare system. As we speak though, the country is obsessed with the question of the firing of FBI Director Comey and the appointment last night of a special counsel who is going to seek to get to the bottom of this question as to whether there was coordination between the Trump campaign and the Russian Government and their attempts to influence an American election.

There have been secret meetings happening in the Senate among Republicans—reportedly 13 Republicans, to be specific—attempting to craft a new version of legislation that passed the House of Representatives, now, I guess,

2 weeks ago, that would rob healthcare from 24 million Americans. According to the Congressional Budget Office, it would drive up costs for everyone immediately by about 15 percent to 20 percent and jeopardize the protections that are built into the law for people with preexisting conditions.

There is no CBO score on the latest House proposal because Republicans decided to ram the bill through without the ability of anyone to read the legislation. No one read that bill. Let's be honest. It was filed hours before it was voted on, and no one knows the cost of that bill because they didn't wait for a CBO score.

It is simply unbelievable that the House of Representatives decided to reorder one-fifth of the American economy without reading the proposal or without understanding its cost, but Republicans in the Senate are attempting to pass their own version of a repeal-and-replace bill. We await the results of these secret partisan meetings.

I think Democrats have been pretty clear that we would like to be in this conversation. We want to preserve what works in the Affordable Care Act, and there is a lot that works. A new report out just a couple of weeks ago shows an astonishing decrease in the number of people who face personal bankruptcy in this country. Why? Because half of personal bankruptcies in the United States of America, prior to the Affordable Care Act being passed, were due to medical debt. So the reason that less people than ever before are having to declare personal bankruptcy is because medical bills don't bankrupt them anymore because of the Affordable Care Act. Let me guarantee you, that number will spike back up if anything approximating the House bill passes.

We think there are good things in the Affordable Care Act. Our constituents agree. Polling now routinely tells you the majority of Americans want to keep the Affordable Care Act, not replace it, but we want to be part of a conversation in which we talk about keeping the things that work and addressing the parts of the healthcare system that don't work. Costs are still way too high. We would like more competition on these exchanges. So let's have a conversation about that.

As of today, Democrats are being shut out of the process. If you are represented by Democrats in the U.S. Senate, you have no voice in this process because Republicans have chosen to do it just amongst their own party. I think that is a shame. I understand in the end, Democrats passed a product in 2010 with Democratic votes, but anybody who was here remembers that there was a long process by which President Obama and Democrats in Congress tried to work with Republicans and brought the bill through the committee process. The HELP Committee and the Finance Committee had exhaustive meetings, hearings, and markups. In the end in the HELP Committee, upon which I sit today, there

were over 100 Republican amendments that were accepted and included in the piece of legislation that eventually passed on the floor of the Senate.

As far as we know, this secret process happening behind closed doors will include no Democrats now and will not go through a committee process. If they ever come up with something that can come up with 50 votes, it will be rushed to the Senate floor. That is outrageous. We want to be part of this process.

I am on the floor not to talk about what will happen if a bill robbing healthcare from millions of Americans, jeopardizing protections for people with preexisting conditions, comes to the floor of the Senate. I want to talk about what is happening right now because President Trump made it very clear, just a few days after he was sworn in, that his desire was to kill the aspects of the American healthcare system that are affected by the Affordable Care Act. By the way, that is almost the entirety of the American healthcare system because that bill did—in addition to extending coverage to 20 million Americans—grant protections from insurance abuse to hundreds of millions more.

A January 20 Executive order issued by the President said that “it is the policy of my Administration to seek the prompt repeal” of the law. It said:

To the maximum extent permitted by law, the Secretary of HHS and the heads of all other executive departments . . . shall exercise all authority available to them to waive, defer, grant exemptions from, or delay the implementation of any provision or requirement in the Act that would impose a fiscal burden on any State or a cost, fee, tax, penalty, or regulatory burden on individuals, families, healthcare providers.

President Trump made it clear that his motive from the start was to destroy the Affordable Care Act. My colleagues, he has consistently kept up that attack. I am often bringing President Trump's tweets to the floor because, well, they continue to exist on social media. It is nice to be reminded of the fact that, over the course of the first 100 days in office, President Trump has been routinely—routinely—attacking the American health care system, saying: ObamaCare will fall of its own weight; be careful—i.e., if you are thinking of signing up, be careful—discouraging people from signing up for these exchanges.

Once again, ObamaCare is dead, says the President of the United States, despite the fact that 19 million people rely on the exchanges for their healthcare coverage. Here is another one: ObamaCare will explode. Do not worry; he has it taken care of, he says. Finally, ObamaCare is in a death spiral.

So these are the routine, almost daily attacks, rhetorically, that this administration has waged against the Affordable Care Act. He has commanded his agencies to pick it apart in any way that they can. So, to the extent there is any diminution in the

health of these exchanges, to the extent that insurers are thinking about not participating or are pushing up their rates, there is only one reason for it. It is the active sabotage campaign that the Trump administration is engaged in to try to destroy the Affordable Care Act.

This is purposeful. This is intentional. This is planned. That Executive order, unlike some other Executive orders, was not just an exercise in political and public relations, because the next month, in February, the IRS announced that it would not reject tax forms from people who failed to answer the question of whether they had health insurance. So the IRS took a definitive step to undermine the Affordable Care Act by telling consumers they were not going to enforce the individual mandate.

Now, here is a news flash: Republicans think the individual mandate is a good idea. After attacking it for the last 6 years, the House bill they passed includes an individual mandate. It does. It is in a slightly different place. Instead of the penalty applying when you lose healthcare, in the House, all they did was just shift the penalty to when you sign up for healthcare again. All they did was move the mandate from when you lose healthcare to when you repurchase healthcare. But it is still there.

The administration is seeking to undermine the existing mandate. Insurance companies have noticed. Senator MCCONNELL came to the floor a week or so ago to take note of the pretty serious premium increases that were requested in Maryland, in part, by Blue Cross Blue Shield. But the head of Blue Cross Blue Shield in Maryland was very clear about why they were increasing rates.

He said the uncertainty around the individual mandate plays a significant role in the company's rate filing because failure to enforce the mandate makes it far more likely that healthier, younger individuals will drop coverage and drive up the costs for everyone else.

Insurance companies are noticing that the administration is picking apart the protections that can keep rates down in the exchanges and, thus, they are filing higher rates. But with less people in the exchanges than anticipated, insurance companies are also rethinking participation. This is intentional as well. Shortly after taking office, the HHS Secretary pulled the advertising for the Affordable Care Act in the last week of open enrollment. We know exactly what happened here because we have the data on who was signing up before Trump took office and after Trump took office.

Before Trump took office, open enrollment was exceeding open enrollment for the prior year. After that decision was made to pull funding for advertising, open enrollment cratered. The former marketing chief for healthcare.gov estimates that 480,000

people did not sign up for coverage in the last week because the ads were pulled and because the President of the United States was out there actively telling people that they should “be careful” before signing up for the exchanges because he was going to kill it.

So almost half a million Americans did not sign up for these exchanges. A half million Americans don't have health care today, potentially, because the Trump administration stopped advertising the exchanges and because the President of the United States told people, essentially, not to sign up.

Finally, let me talk about what is happening right now with respect to something called cost-sharing reduction payments. A big part of the Affordable Care Act—and really the foundation of the Affordable Care Act—is subsidies that are given to individuals, often passed straight through to insurance companies, in order to help folks who are lower income buy insurance.

Guess what. Republicans think this is a good idea too. I know that because we stole the idea from Republicans. This was initially a Heritage Foundation plan that was adopted by Mitt Romney in Massachusetts. It was the Republican alternative to the Clinton healthcare bill in 1993. So this idea of individuals getting subsidies is a Republican idea that Democrats stole.

Republicans included it in the House bill. The subsidies are lower, but they are still there. The subsidies come in two forms. One, there is a tax credit to individuals based upon their income, and, two, for lower income individuals there is a payment that goes to the insurance companies that mitigates the amount of money that you have to pay out of pocket—just two different kinds of subsidies.

These subsidies are relied upon by the insurance companies to continue to offer these products. The Trump administration is paying the subsidies but is trickling them out 1 month at a time, constantly making public pronouncements that question whether they will continue to make those payments.

Here is what OMB Director Mick Mulvaney told reporters. He said the administration could pull the plug on subsidies at any time. He said: We haven't made any decisions. The payments are due, I believe, the 20th or the 21st of every single month. We have not made any decisions at all on whether we will pay in May.

Think about if you are an insurance company executive deciding, A, whether to put a plan on an exchange or, B, if you put a plan on an exchange, how much to charge, and the White House is telling you: You may not get the subsidies that are called for under the law, and we may give you no warning in pulling those subsidies. We are going to pay them for May. We might not pay them for June. Maybe we will pay them for July and August. Maybe we will pull them for September.

How would you make a decision on how much to charge consumers? Why

would you enter into a contract with a State or Federal-based exchange? So whether it is the attack on the individual mandate, whether it is the decision to pull advertising, or whether it is the games being played with cost-sharing reduction payments, there is a coordinated effort inside the White House today to destroy the American healthcare system to the extent that much of the system has the Affordable Care Act at its foundation.

President Trump was pretty clear about this the day of the failure of the first healthcare bill in the House of Representatives. He essentially telegraphed that he was going to try to undermine the Affordable Care Act as punishment to Democrats, and that if he hurt enough people, eventually Democrats would come to the table and negotiate with him. Well, I have a message for the President of the United States: That is not how it is going to work. You are not going to blackmail Democrats by hurting our constituents by undermining the Affordable Care Act.

We want to be part of this discussion about improving the healthcare system. We do. We want to work with Republicans. It will be a much smaller and likely less revolutionary bill than Republicans are considering today, but it will have both party's fingerprints on it. We are not going to be part of a bill that strips healthcare away from tens of millions of Americans, and we cannot support this administration while it seeks to undermine the Affordable Care Act on a daily basis.

If these exchanges fail—I don't think they will, but if the exchanges fail—or if rates go up, there is only one place to put the blame—on an administration that is actively, regularly, and on a daily basis trying to sabotage the Affordable Care Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, are we in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are not. We are on the Brand nomination.

THE INTERNET

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I rise today to point out that the Federal Communications Commission is voting today, perhaps this morning, to begin the process to roll back a regulatory framework that should never have been imposed on broadband service providers in the first place. Like many of my colleagues, I am glad the FCC is working to restore the "light touch" regulatory framework that has allowed the internet to thrive since its creation.

This action sets the stage for Congress to then put a legislative solution in place that strikes the right balance between providing regulatory oversight on the one hand and giving the broadband industry the flexibility it needs to innovate and expand on the other hand.

We should not rely on a classification that was devised during the depression

era. There should be 21st-century rules for 21st-century technology. As chairman of the Senate subcommittee that oversees internet issues, I look forward to the task ahead. Keeping the internet free and open is a goal shared by most of us and by many of my friends on the other side of the aisle. A bipartisan solution can help provide long-term certainty for both consumers and broadband providers.

This certainty will be essential to our efforts to close the digital divide and remove barriers to internet connectivity that exist in Mississippi and around the United States. The online experience we enjoy today and the revolutionary advances of the internet over the past quarter century did not happen because of the heavy hand of the Federal Government.

These advances happened because the Federal Government stayed out of the way, supporting a "light touch" regulatory framework where innovation, competition, and investment could truly survive and thrive.

This was the framework that existed under both Republican and Democratic administrations until 2015, when politics got in the way. With a party-line vote, the FCC that year decided to adopt a utility-style framework, as I said, resulting from legislation devised during the depression. It classified broadband service as a common carrier under title II of the Communications Act of 1934.

A utility-style framework for telephones may have worked during the Bell telephone monopoly of the depression era, but that does not mean it is a right fit now. Nor does it mean we should adopt a completely hands off regulatory approach, which I would also oppose. The goal of net neutrality, which is designed to prevent internet providers from prioritizing some legal content over others has not gone away. But we know that handing over broad control of the internet to Washington is also not the answer.

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai has outlined some of the reasons for this, including the impact of title II regulations on big and small internet service providers. If we do not give providers the confidence to invest in better services and better infrastructure, it could limit consumers' options and services. This could also affect our efforts to close the digital divide, to bring the digital world to our rural communities in Alabama and Mississippi. Underserved communities could remain underserved.

Without broadband access, these communities could lose out on critical jobs, economic development, and many other opportunities borne out of the thriving internet economy.

At the end of the day, we need to be asking: What do Americans want and what do Americans need? They need broadband that is accessible, affordable, fast, and reliable. They want to be able to choose the services and content that best meets their needs.

These are the priorities that need to be kept in mind as the FCC works today and as lawmakers work to strike a balance between regulatory oversight and free market productivity.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL CARSON

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

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, every week I have been coming to the Senate floor to talk about someone in my great State of Alaska who makes Alaska a better place for all of us—for the community, for everybody living there. I call this person our Alaskan of the Week. To be honest, it is one of the most fulfilling things I get to do as a Senator, recognizing back home and across the country special people in my State.

There is no doubt that many here in the Chamber and the people who are watching from home have seen pictures and television shows about Alaska. We are a little biased—I know one of our pages is an Alaskan—that we have the most beautiful State, not only in the country but in the world. So we want to encourage everybody watching to come visit Alaska. It will be the trip of a lifetime, absolutely guaranteed. It is truly the people of Alaska who make our State so special, people with big hearts who band together to solve challenges. Like all places, we have challenges.

This week I would like to recognize Michael Carson for his work to help people in Alaska who are struggling with addiction. We know this is a problem that is impacting every single State in our great Nation. Michael lives in Palmer, AK, a picturesque town about 45 miles from Anchorage in Alaska's vast Matanuska-Susitna Valley—what we just call the Valley or the Mat-Su. It is about the size of West Virginia, so don't get me going on the size of Alaska. It will embarrass most of my—actually all of my colleagues here, unfortunately for them. Palmer is flanked by the rolling Talkeetna Mountains to the north and the sawtoothed Chugach Mountains to the south. It is a close-knit community where most people know each other.

Many people in Palmer and the Mat-Su across the State know Michael Carson's name. Like many Alaskans, Michael's story is one full of adventure. Originally from California, he received his undergraduate in early childhood development from the University of Texas. After hitchhiking through Africa and spending a summer in Mexico, he took a job teaching in Nome, AK, in 1974. A few years later, he moved to the Mat-Su to teach and taught our students for many years.

He retired from teaching, but his yearning to help people, particularly our youth, did not leave him. He got a job at Covenant House in Anchorage, which is a homeless youth shelter. It is a wonderful place, by the way. I am a little biased on this one; my wife Julie happens to work at Covenant House. Michael's shift started at 8 p.m. and ended at 8 a.m. That is what he was doing at Covenant House. He spent those hours walking through the city, reaching out to kids on the streets, sharing his own story, and inspiring our youth because his story also involves recovery. It is a privilege to say here on the Senate floor that Mike has been sober for 29 years.

Eventually realizing that kids in the Mat-Su Valley also needed a place to go when they were in trouble and needed help, Michael and another incredible constituent of mine, Michelle Overstreet, founded MYHouse in Palmer, a place that provides services like job assistance, access to healthcare, clothing, food, and showers for homeless youth. Michael still sits on the board, still remains a champion for all youth, particularly those in recovery and the homeless or disadvantaged. He leads recovery groups on-site weekly, as well as meetings with clients who are struggling. He has also volunteered to host recovery groups at the Mat-Su youth detention facility for the past 13 years. Michael has helped many young people get sober and stay sober.

In Michelle Overstreet's words, it is not uncommon for youth to come into the drop-in center, homeless and just out of juvenile detention, and ask specifically for Michael, to come in and say that he helped them somewhere along their journey through life to sobriety, just to come in and say: Thank you, Michael.

Most of us know that our country is in the midst of an opioid crisis, one that has become an epidemic in many places across the country. In 2015, more people in America died from overdoses—over 52,000, and most were linked to opioids and heroin—than car crashes or gun violence.

On Wednesday morning, Alaskans awoke to a disturbing headline in the Alaska Dispatch News: "Anchorage is seeing a dramatic surge in heroin overdoses." Anchorage is the largest city in Alaska. It is my hometown. The article said that since May 1, there have been more than 2 overdoses a day in Anchorage—34 overdoses in just a little more than 2 weeks.

Like almost every State in this great Nation of ours, Alaska is being hit hard by the opioid crisis, and we are trying to focus as much attention as we can in a bipartisan fashion on addressing this crisis, whether in Alaska, Kentucky, New Hampshire, Indiana, or Vermont.

We need people like Michael. Every State does. He started the only grass-roots opioid task force in the State of Alaska and continues to chair that effort to this day. He knows too well how the abuse of opioids, other drugs, and

alcohol robs our citizens—but particularly our youth—of their lives, promise, and future. He also understands how very important it is to have resources for those who need the support and recovery. Those resources come in many forms. We have been trying in the Congress in the last year, year and a half, to bring significant resources to our State and local communities. We are doing that.

State support is also important across the country. Perhaps most important is the community support and having people like Michael on the frontlines who understand that addiction is not a moral failure and that people who are suffering need help. They need help, not moral judgments from us.

Because of Michael's involvement and the involvement of so many others in Alaska and particularly in the Mat-Su, there are places for people who are suffering to call and get help. There are places to go and heal and places where our youth can have leaders who listen to them, like Michael.

Michael says it is vital for his own recovery to continue to help people who are suffering from addiction. He calls it "survivor obligation." I call it the work of angels.

Michael, thanks for all you do, and congratulations on being our Alaskan of the week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from South Dakota.

THE INTERNET

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the internet worked great in 2014 when there were no Federal net neutrality rules. Truth be told, even after the Obama-era Federal Communications Commission applied depression-era phone monopoly regulations to broadband in 2015, most Americans saw little or no difference in their internet experience. The internet still creates jobs, expands educational opportunities, keeps us in touch with loved ones, and, as a bonus, it is often entertaining.

This internet that we know and love isn't going to fall apart anytime soon, no matter what the FCC decides. But there are important policy questions that need to be answered about how the internet will grow and develop into the future. Let's put the apocalyptic rhetoric and fearmongering aside.

The internet doesn't belong just to Republicans, Democrats, big Silicon Valley tech companies, internet service providers, small Silicon Prairie startups, or the Federal Government. It belongs to everyone. It is global. It is best when it is free and open.

Today, as the FCC reconsiders the flawed broadband regulations it issued only 2 years ago, Congress should look back at the path that we could have taken but didn't. In November of 2014, I offered former FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler an opportunity for Democrats and Republicans to come together to craft a permanent legislative solution

banning controversial practices known as blocking, throttling, and paid prioritization of internet traffic. With colleagues in the House of Representatives, I even put forward a draft bill doing exactly that. It wasn't a final offer but, rather, an outreach to get the conversation started. I thought the time and opportunity to protect the open internet on a bipartisan basis had arrived. Through bipartisan legislation, I believed Congress should put into statute widely accepted principles of network management, commonly referred to as "net neutrality."

Our idea for legislation was straightforward: Combine protections ensuring that owners of broadband infrastructure can't use their role to manipulate the user experience with those guaranteeing a continuation of the light-touch regulatory policies that helped the internet thrive for two decades.

But Chairman Wheeler rejected our idea for bipartisan legislation. Instead, he and his staff lobbied to block such discussions from even happening in Congress. He then, with only partisan support, issued an order that gave the FCC authority to regulate the internet under old laws designed for phone monopolies and eliminated all the authority the Federal Trade Commission had to police broadband providers.

I represent South Dakota, a rural State that is home to small but still very innovative technology businesses. In other parts of the State, communities lack access to high-speed broadband. In the debate over the FCC regulating broadband with rules designed for phone monopolies, there were many concerns that Chairman Wheeler's approach would create uncertainty that chills investment.

"Chilling investment" is a term that one often hears about the business community. To me, what it really means is that many Americans in rural communities will have to wait longer before they have an opportunity to select high-speed internet service. Today there are 34 million Americans who lack access to broadband services at home.

As innovation on the internet thrives, demand for data rises, and the stock market hits all-time highs, one would have suspected that broadband investment would continue growing as it had for two decades. But according to one analysis, annual investment actually went down 5.5 percent in 2016 compared to 2014. This is a troubling sign that private investment may have second thoughts about the ability to turn capital expenditures into future profits under an excessive regulatory regime.

Chairman Wheeler assured the public that his FCC would not use new authority over the internet to aggressively restrict many regular online practices, but he could not offer assurances that, as years pass and administrations change, such regulatory restraint would remain. His order gives wide legal latitude for any future FCC

not bound by his commitments to touch any and every corner of the internet. After all, unless grounded in legislation, partisan policy changes through administrative action can be fleeting.

Today's action at the FCC aptly underscores the concern that the FCC's partisan approach to internet policy in 2015 did not put the internet on a solid foundation. I know there are many upset about what the FCC is doing. I felt much the same way 2 years ago when the FCC voted to proceed after my bipartisan outreach had been rejected.

We should not, however, view the FCC's action today as a final outcome. While I commend Chairman Ajit Pai and Commissioner Michael O'Rielly for taking this necessary step, I fully recognize that today's action alone does not create ideal certainty for the internet. There is more work yet to do.

In politics, it is rare to get a second chance at bipartisan compromise, yet right now we have an opportunity to accomplish what eluded us 2 years ago—clear and certain rules in statute to protect the open internet. We have another chance to sit down, to discuss every stakeholder's concerns, and to work toward the common goal of protecting the internet.

While the FCC's 2015 order may soon be consigned to the dustbin of history, the last few months have shown that political winds can and often do shift suddenly.

To my colleagues in both the majority and minority: The only way to truly provide legal and political certainty for open internet protections is for Congress to pass bipartisan legislation. We need a statute offering clear and enduring rules that balance innovation and investment throughout the entire internet ecosystem.

In crafting rules, we need to listen to the concerns of all Americans who support an open internet but who may have differing opinions about the greatest threats to online freedom. For some Americans, the greatest concern is meddling by internet service providers, and for others it is unelected bureaucrats attempting to overprotect Americans from products and services that they actually like.

Online innovation is a virtuous circle. Online companies need robust and widely available broadband networks to reach their customers, and ISPs need the online experience to be compelling enough to drive subscriber demand.

We need to work together collaboratively to find the right policies for the internet. I firmly believe we can find common ground to protect the internet, so long as we don't fixate on the misguided notion that monopoly regulation is the only way to preserve it. While some may wish to wait until the activities at the FCC and in the courts have completely run their course, my preference would be to begin bipartisan work on such legisla-

tion without any further delay. Innovation and job creation should no longer take a backseat to partisan point scoring.

It is time for Congress to finally settle this matter. I am happy to meet at any time with any of my colleagues who are serious about discussing a path forward. I would also welcome discussing any new open internet proposals from my colleagues that balance the need for both innovation and investment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, after reviewing Rachel Brand's record and testimony during her confirmation hearing, I cannot support her nomination to become Associate Attorney General.

Ms. Brand is a fierce supporter of the so-called Patriot Act and the bulk collection of millions of Americans' data. Americans deserve an Associate Attorney General who can properly balance their Constitutionally protected right to privacy against national security interests. Ms. Brand has demonstrated her willingness to abridge those rights.

I am particularly disturbed by Ms. Brand's tenure as the Assistant Attorney General for the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Policy from 2005 to 2007. Ms. Brand worked at the Department at the time when Bradley Schlozman, a high-ranking official within the Department of Civil Rights, was accused of inappropriately politicizing the Department. Ms. Brand's emails during her time at the Department indicate that she may have been aware of and, indeed, a willing participant in this inappropriate activity. Conservative groups are now urging Attorney General Sessions to "wash out the progressive liberal activism that infects the agency from top to bottom." This Justice Department under Attorney General Sessions is already facing its own ethics crisis. When President Trump flouts protocols and procedures with impunity, I cannot in good conscience vote to allow Ms. Brand to return to the Department of Justice and continue where she left off.

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

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

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, we are still dealing with some of the same issues we have dealt with before. It is interesting to me the number of people who have asked: Is Congress obsessed right now with all of the press reports and all of the things that are happening around the Presidency and everything else? I have said to them that is one of the things on our list, but that is not what we are talking about

the most. We are working on issues like tax reform and healthcare issues and regulatory issues.

I just had three bills that went through the markup process just yesterday that deal with small business regulation and how we are going to be able to manage getting things back in order. We spent all day at lunch on Tuesday and we spent all day at lunch on Wednesday with our entire conference in a working lunch together and talked about healthcare policies. We are still working on trying to finish these issues that absolutely need to get done.

Healthcare is one of those issues that has been one of the prime conversations now for years, and we are in the final stretch of actually working through an actual repeal and replace of multiple sections of the Affordable Care Act that have caused the greatest amount of damage, but I still have people who will catch me and ask: Well, there are beneficial parts. What are you going to keep, and what is going to go, and why do we need to replace it?

I will typically smile at folks and say: Let me give you a quick recap as to why we need to replace this and what is really happening. It may be different in your State than it is in mine, but let me lay it out as to where we are and what has been said.

Remember, back in the earliest days, the Affordable Care Act being passed, it was all about premiums decreasing. In my State, premiums went up just last year—in 1 year—76 percent in the individual market. It was a 1-year increase of 76 percent. The year before, under the Affordable Care Act, they went up 35 percent in 1 year. Premiums not only have not stabilized, but they have accelerated out of control.

It was all about deductibles decreasing. Deductibles have also skyrocketed. It was about, if you like your doctor or if you like your healthcare, you can keep it. Doctors have moved to other hospitals. Doctors' offices have stopped being independent. They have to be able to work with other facilities so as to maintain the compliance requirements there. Most of the independent doctors in Oklahoma are no longer independent doctors. They now work under a corporate structure or they cannot survive.

As to this whole thing about competition on the open market, we used to have multiple companies in Oklahoma that provided insurance. We now have one. Every other company has left. There is one company left. There is no competition driving down prices. It is a monopoly. It is the same thing that is happening all over the country. Just this year, there are one-third of the counties in America that now only have one insurance provider. In my State, all 77 counties only have one insurance provider.

To tell you where things are really headed in this area of competition, United, which is one of the largest providers of healthcare, dropped out of all

of the exchanges nationwide—everything. It is doing none. In the past couple of days, Aetna announced it will no longer do competition in any State anywhere in the country. The number of companies even willing to try to live up to these regulations continues to drop off. That is what is really happening in our States.

If you want to know what that actually means to real families, let me give you a taste as to what comes into my office regularly because I have many people who call my office and say: Protect this. Protect this. Protect whatever it may be in the healthcare coverage. You have to make sure you guard it.

I will typically say to them: Let me introduce you to some other people who are also calling in and who are also writing in.

I will leave their names out, but let me give you just some of the situations:

A single mom, who has children and is from Norman, OK, contacted us and said her family has seen its premiums triple over the last 2 years. Currently, its premiums are \$1,500 a month, with a deductible for the family of \$24,000.

Another family contacted me who has a disabled child. The federally mandated health insurance under ObamaCare for 2016 was \$895. For 2017, it is \$1,553 a month for this family with a disabled child.

A husband and wife in Tulsa, OK, wrote me. Their current monthly expense for just insurance is \$1,500—twice the amount of their house payment. They have a relative who is working three part-time jobs and cannot get a full-time job because, under ObamaCare, a full-time job also requires all of the benefits. No one is hiring in that full-time area because of the additional requirements for ObamaCare. He is working three part-time jobs, and because he is working three part-time jobs and has no health insurance, he is also paying the penalty—fine—on his taxes for not having insurance. Not only can he not get a full-time job because of the ObamaCare requirements, but he is paying a penalty because of it as well.

A husband and wife from Newkirk, OK, wrote me. For their insurance alone, not including out-of-pocket medical expenses, the husband and wife will spend \$21,965 this year on healthcare coverage.

Another family wrote me from Stillwater, OK. Their healthcare coverage used to be 5 percent of their family income. Now their healthcare coverage is 22 percent of their family healthcare income.

I have another family who wrote to me, and it is very interesting. They are from Oklahoma City, and they wrote me and just gave me a breakout—a chart—that they had created. In 2015, their monthly premium had skyrocketed to \$1,400. In 2016, it was \$1,500. Now, in 2017, it is \$2,042 a month. Let that soak in for a moment.

Then they made the statement that there are financially strapped families who will not go to the doctor due to this out-of-pocket expense. That is the additional deductible that is on top of their \$2,000 premium. Individuals buying private insurance have no recourse because we have no other option that we are allowed to go to. There is only one insurance provider available to us. We need competition in this State in order to take away the financial burden on our families.

All they want are options. Yet right now what the Federal Government has told them is: No. We have a policy, and you have to buy that policy. If you do not buy the policy we pick for you, we will fine you on your taxes.

They are stuck. Thousands of Oklahomans are stuck.

Why is it such a big issue? Because of how it affects individuals. Why is it such a big issue? Because of what is still coming.

There is this false belief that the Affordable Care Act is fully implemented. That is not true. Many of the aspects of the most onerous parts of the Affordable Care Act did not go into implementation until after President Obama left office. Let me give you some examples of some things they had back-loaded that would not start until after he had left office:

There is the Cadillac tax. Every union family across the country will start to face much higher costs on their insurance because their insurance is considered too good under the Affordable Care Act. So all of those great union families who have great healthcare insurance across the country are about to start facing additional taxes and fees for their insurance being better than their next-door neighbors' insurance as the Affordable Care Act tried to push down healthcare insurance to be the same for everyone.

There are increased penalties that are still coming because the full penalties have not been rolled out yet on all of the taxes. They have gone up a little bit each year, but they will accelerate now over the next several years.

There are increased taxes. The medical device tax, which has been sitting out there, has been delayed, but it now will go into full implementation. There is also a tax, which is a health insurer tax, that adds an additional tax to every insurance company that of course they will then pass on to every single premium.

There are still all of the costs that are associated with the expansion of Medicaid. Now, there has been a lot of conversation about the expansion of Medicaid. As many people know, this was an expansion of Medicaid for people from 100 percent of poverty to 138 percent of poverty. It is just in that small bracket that there had been an expansion of Medicaid. Initially, the Federal Government covered all of the costs of that expansion. Then, starting this year, the States pick up the additional cost. My State, like several oth-

ers, chose not to do the expansion, and my State legislature and my Governor have taken a lot of heat for that. Yet what they said several years ago is, once the State has to pick up the additional bill, we will not be able to afford that expansion. We cannot do that.

Let me tell you what that would mean to my State. Because we did not expand, we do not have an additional cost this year, but let me give you a parallel. The State of Oregon is almost exactly the same size as the population in the State of Oklahoma. It will now start taking on an additional \$257 million a year in its State budget because of the expansion of Medicaid it took on.

Now, that may not seem like a big deal to some people in this Chamber, but in my State right now, our State legislature and our Governor are struggling to balance a budget, and we are going through all kinds of issues because, right now, our State is about \$800 million behind budget, and this is after being \$800 million behind budget last year. If the people in my State will imagine what is going on right now in the State capitol, if we had an additional \$257 million added to that hole, then that is what it would mean for our State.

There are real effects that are out there, and I understand healthcare is extremely personal. That is why it has always been something that has been decided by individual families, not by the Federal Government and, in my State, by someone 1,000 miles away who is trying to make healthcare decisions for them.

What we are really trying to do with this is to deal with the issues I just laid out. This is not about partisan politics. This is about people and families who have been hurt by what is happening in the Affordable Care Act—by someone 1,000 miles away who is trying to tell them what policies they can and cannot buy, by the skyrocketing costs, by the actual effect that has happened. While I have some people who say that is not real, I could line up the families in my State who used to have coverage but who no longer have coverage because they cannot afford it anymore.

Then there are the simplistic answers to, Why don't we just cover everybody in the country? Why don't we just do a single-payer system? People do not understand. They know how bad it has become now and how hard it has become now. You would accelerate that multi-fold if you were to just slip into a single-payer system.

What do we need to do? Let me give you a couple of quick thoughts. We are going to need transition time. Whatever you hear about all of the conversation we have about the Affordable Care Act or replacing the Affordable Care Act, please know that all of the conversations for us begin with how do we do a good transition from where we are now to where we need to be.

I have folks who say: Well, next week, this ends. Well, next year, this suddenly goes away.

No, there will have to be a transition process, and it will be over several years.

We are also still looking at some of the most basic elements. For instance, I have had folks say: I want to be able to keep my kids on my insurance until 26. That has been assumed, quite frankly, by the House and by the Senate, but the House bill that has been passed already keeps that. There has been a lot of conversation about preexisting conditions. Most of the conversation we have had as Senators, behind closed doors, is about taking care of people with preexisting conditions.

Those are very real issues.

We understand the dynamic of what happens back and forth with insurance companies and families and the struggles families have, whether they are cancer patients, diabetic, have rare blood diseases or Alzheimer's. There are so many struggles that are out there. We understand that. That is in our conversation as well. Yet we have to be able to find practical ways to start leveling out the cost of insurance. We cannot survive with rates skyrocketing like they are, and people need to know the safety net is going to actually be there.

We have to resolve these issues. We have to work for the benefit of our States, which cannot afford these overwhelming cost increases. We have to work for the benefit of families who are facing the issue and, quite frankly, for the Federal taxpayer as well.

While my State struggles with an \$800 million hole that it is facing right in the budget, by the end of our session, it will have had that resolved. It is constitutionally required to have that resolved. The Federal Government is facing a \$20 trillion budget hole right now—\$20 trillion. For all the folks who say: Just add more to it, it will be fine, may I remind you, there is a day all of that has to be paid. We have to be able to be responsible with our Federal budget at the same time we are helping our States to be able to manage theirs and at the same time we are helping our families to do the same.

No, this is not simple, but it has to be done. We have to be able to find a way to restore it. This is not about returning healthcare back to where we were years ago. That, quite frankly, is gone. As I mentioned before, all of those private doctors that used to function in my State, they don't function in my State anymore. They are all under corporate structures. The insurance companies have left or have merged. Hospitals in my State have merged because they couldn't survive the last few years of ObamaCare. Even if we wanted to go back to how healthcare was—and we don't—but even if we wanted to, we can't because there has been so much change in the last few years. We have to be able to actually fix where we are.

So I would encourage continued communication. Lots of folks have contacted my office on every side of this

issue. Keep doing that. Lots of folks in this Chamber have had dialogue, and though it looks like a partisan exercise, it is actually a pretty open conversation among our conference to try to figure out how we are going to actually help families, help our States, help our Federal budget, and help us to be sustainable on these critical issues.

I have gotten lots of other letters I can bring. There are lots of other stories out there. I think we know enough now to be able to know this is something that needs to be done. So while the Nation is distracted, we cannot be distracted. Let's finish the healthcare conversation. Lots of families are counting on us.

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

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

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, last night, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appointed Robert Mueller as special counsel to oversee the investigation into Russia's alleged meddling in the election last fall and any related misconduct. Robert Mueller is perhaps the single-most qualified individual to lead such an investigation, in my view, and he is certainly independent.

As a former FBI Director—the longest serving FBI Director since J. Edgar Hoover—he, by any measure, has the experience and the credibility and the credentials to conduct a nonpartisan investigation and come to a conclusion based on the facts alone. We could use some conclusions based on facts here in Washington, with the relentless torrent of rumor, gossip, and suspicion but very few facts. It is clear to me that Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein felt this was in the best interests of the Department of Justice and the country, and I trust his judgment on the matter.

I do think there is a related concern now that a special counsel has been chosen; that is, the proliferation of hearings and contact with witnesses and the principals over this Russia matter that while certainly legitimate in terms of doing oversight, which is our responsibility as the legislative branch, we can't—and shouldn't—intrude or perhaps undermine inadvertently the investigation being conducted by the executive branch and the special counsel. I think this is something we should talk about as a Senate because I know each committee that has some jurisdictional hook on this issue wants, of course, to do its job, but I think, if we don't deconflict between committees, as well as between the role of the Justice Department and the special counsel, we could risk inadvertently harming the investigation. I

trust no one would want to do that intentionally.

Sometimes, having served myself—as has the distinguished Presiding Officer as the former attorney general of Alaska—it is interesting, this is my first legislative role in government. I have been here for a while now, and I am starting to get the hang of things, but the fact is, sometimes I think legislators are confused about their role when it comes to investigations. They are not the FBI. Legislators are not the Department of Justice. They can't investigate a counterintelligence matter or a criminal matter. That is simply within the exclusive purview of the executive branch.

What we can do and what we must do, in my view, is to continue to conduct a bipartisan oversight investigation into these matters for our own purposes, which are legislative purposes, not executive branch or prosecutorial purposes. Now that Director Mueller has been appointed as special counsel and will be doing that on behalf of the Department of Justice and the executive branch, I think it is really important for us to again consider whether this proliferation of hearings and running down every rabbit trail that happens to pop up is really in the best interests of getting to the bottom of this matter.

I believe it is our duty—and this would be the case no matter who was in the White House—to get the facts and to conduct our legitimate oversight investigation here but in a way that cooperates with or certainly at least coordinates and deconflicts with the Department of Justice's investigation under the auspices of Director Mueller. In the meantime, I will continue to work with my colleagues on the Senate Intelligence Committee on a broad bipartisan basis to conduct the kind of investigation that is entirely appropriate so we can get to the bottom of this matter. The American people, of course, deserve nothing less.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, on another matter, the Senate continues to work toward repealing and replacing ObamaCare, unfortunately, without any help whatsoever from our Democratic colleagues, even though they know ObamaCare is failing the millions of people who buy their insurance in the individual market. Premiums are skyrocketing because of adverse selection and deductibles are so high they are effectively denied the benefit of having insurance in the first place. One would think an elected Senator representing those constituents would care enough about it to try to do something about it, but our Democratic colleagues, because they are so tied to ObamaCare and they feel like they have to defend it at all costs, I think it has blinded them to the failings of ObamaCare, certainly in the individual market. There ought to be some basis for us to work together in the best interests of all our constituents and the entire country.

Some of our colleagues have said: Well, we would be revisiting ObamaCare even if Hillary Clinton had been elected, and that is absolutely true because ObamaCare is failing millions of Americans, and it is our responsibility, on a bipartisan basis, to do something about it. So far, the politics of the day seem to be carrying our Democratic colleagues along with it. I hope at some time the fever breaks and they will see fit to do their duty, as we are attempting to do our duty, which is to replace ObamaCare with affordable healthcare that preserves individual choices and doesn't continue to exacerbate and aggravate the national debt and our financial status in the country.

ObamaCare, we now know, was oversold. At the time, the President said: If you like your policy, you can keep your policy; if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor; and, oh, by the way, a family of four will see a reduction in their premiums of \$2,500 a year. None of those claims proved to be true.

Again, the Presiding Officer was a former attorney general, as I was in my State, and we had a Consumer Protection Division. When people misrepresented the services or product they sold, we sued them. We went after them for consumer fraud. ObamaCare, to me, is one of the largest cases of consumer fraud I have ever seen, and people deserve better.

It is time to do away with this government-mandated, top-down approach that doesn't work. It is time to provide the American people with more affordable options. That is what we are trying to do. One would think that would be something all of us would want to do.

ObamaCare has taken a heavy toll on folks in my State. It is estimated that more than one-third of our counties are down to just one health insurance provider this year, and the ones that are there are saying that unless something changes, they are going to see double-digit increases in premiums for 2018. They are down to one provider because everybody else has decided they have lost enough money and they want to get out while they can. To have one provider is not about more options and choices and better coverage, it is an unworkable path forward for our Nation's healthcare needs.

Fortunately, every member of the Republican conference is now working together to do away with this unworkable healthcare plan and replace it with healthcare that helps American families get the coverage they need at a price they can afford. Why wouldn't we all be interested in providing the healthcare they need at a price they can afford?

The House has taken the first critical step, and I know my colleagues and I are eager to do our part. Since the Democrats refuse to lift a finger, we are going to have to do this with 52 Republicans, and it is not easy, but just because it is hard is no excuse for not

succeeding. We must succeed in the best interests of our constituents.

This isn't just a matter of taking something that is OK and making it better; this is taking something that is failing and, if we fail to act, will continue to drag Americans by the millions down with it.

It is important to understand the trials that Americans have faced under ObamaCare so we can move forward in a direction that supports families across the country. One of my constituents wrote me recently and told me that his premiums were going up by about 50 percent. To make matters worse, his doctors wouldn't accept patients on ObamaCare plans. That is a theme we have seen across the country: healthcare options dwindling while prices keep getting higher. The cost of his healthcare keeps going up, and his salary isn't going up at the same rate. He is losing disposable income, even though he has a job. So he is literally poorer as a result of ObamaCare. This isn't helping him, this is hurting him, and all because his monthly payment for health insurance is climbing. So he is living from paycheck to paycheck, and of course he is worried about the future, which is the reason he contacted me.

Unfortunately, this gentleman is representative of the unintended consequences brought about by ObamaCare. All of our offices get a lot of calls, a lot of emails and letters just like his. He is not on the exchanges because he wants to keep his doctors, and he is employed with employer-provided health insurance. To many in America, this would be a huge blessing, but unfortunately ObamaCare did nothing to help people like him. His premiums are going up so high, he is concerned about being able to put food on the table for his family. What a tragedy. What a disaster. This is truly a manmade disaster, and it is a crystal clear example of just how flawed ObamaCare really is.

This constituent of mine ended his letter to me by calling on Congress to fully repeal ObamaCare, and that is exactly what we will do. He is not alone in calling for change. Many Texans have been writing and calling in, and have been for some time, to tell me their ObamaCare story. It is making their lives harder, as I mentioned, with skyrocketing premiums, higher deductibles, and fewer choices of doctors and healthcare providers. These are the folks I was sent here to represent and whom I am fighting for, and each of us, I know, is doing their part—at least on this side of the aisle—to fight for our constituents who are being hurt by the status quo.

The status quo is not acceptable. I know it is not acceptable to our colleagues across the aisle, but they are so frozen in place by their own politics that they can't even step across the aisle and work with us in areas where we might agree. I hope this happens at some point, but it is not happening right now.

So we are going to repeal and replace ObamaCare and come up with the very best healthcare plan that we can—again, one that preserves choices, brings premiums down, and makes it more affordable.

Here is the final reason why we need to do this: We promised. We promised. In the last elections, we promised. There is a reason why, when ObamaCare passed, there were 60 Democrats and today there are 48. It is because in every intervening election we have made the perils of ObamaCare an issue, and in every election our friends across the aisle have lost Senators because they simply can't defend the status quo.

But beyond elections, I believe there is a time to engage in electioneering and there is a time to govern, and now is the time for us to govern responsibly. But it does have political benefits, too, because if people think you are doing a good job and if people think you care about them, then, they are likely to reward you politically. But that is not the main reason we should do it. We should do it because it is the right thing to do and because people are hurting and people are anxious and concerned about their future, living paycheck to paycheck, with ObamaCare taking a bigger and bigger bite out of their ability to provide for their family.

So we are going to get this done. Just because it is not easy isn't an excuse for not doing it. We can't complain that it is too hard because that is what we asked our constituents to send us here to do—to do the hard stuff, not the easy stuff—to do the hard stuff. This is hard, but it is not impossible. It is imminently doable. But it takes political will and commitment not just to keep our promise but, then, to do the dead-level best of our abilities to come up with a plan that actually believes not in more government control but in more individual control over your healthcare choices and to bring competition back into the marketplace, to let the market set rates and quality rather than the government determining this from Washington, DC.

One thing I truly believe is that competition makes things better for consumers. It brings down prices and it improves service because in a competitive environment where people have choices, they are going to go to the choice which serves their interests the best. They are going to reward the people who are doing the best job of delivering what they need and what they want at the price they can afford. It has a way of regulating the insurance market better than anything Washington, DC, could do—particularly by command and control of programs like ObamaCare.

So we are going to get it done, and we are all working together. We would continue to invite our colleagues across the aisle not to sit on their hands, not to do nothing but to do what they can, working with us in a

nonpartisan or bipartisan way to help save the people who are currently being damaged and hurt by the failures of ObamaCare but then to help us build something better, something more durable than what we have seen with ObamaCare.

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.

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

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Brand nomination?

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, 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.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 131 Ex.]

YEAS—52

Alexander	Flake	Perdue
Barrasso	Gardner	Portman
Blunt	Graham	Risch
Boozman	Grassley	Roberts
Burr	Hatch	Rounds
Capito	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Hoeven	Sasse
Cochran	Inhofe	Scott
Collins	Isakson	Shelby
Corker	Johnson	Strange
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Tillis
Cruz	McCain	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Wicker
Enzi	Moran	Young
Ernst	Murkowski	
Fischer	Paul	

NAYS—46

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Peters
Bennet	Harris	Reed
Blumenthal	Hassan	Sanders
Booker	Heinrich	Schatz
Brown	Heitkamp	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Manchin	Udall
Coons	Markey	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	McCaskey	Warner
Donnelly	Menendez	Warren
Duckworth	Merkley	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murphy	Wyden
Feinstein	Murray	
Franken	Nelson	

NOT VOTING—2

Hirono Kaine

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will

be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative 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 nomination of Terry Branstad, of Iowa, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Republic of China.

Mitch McConnell, Jeff Flake, Bob Corker, Roger F. Wicker, Cory Gardner, Marco Rubio, John Boozman, Pat Roberts, Joni Ernst, Mike Rounds, Todd Young, Rob Portman, John Thune, Chuck Grassley, Richard Burr, James M. Inhofe, John Cornyn.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Terry Branstad, of Iowa, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Republic of China shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 86, nays 12, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 132 Ex.]

YEAS—86

Alexander	Franken	Murray
Barrasso	Gardner	Nelson
Bennet	Graham	Paul
Blunt	Grassley	Perdue
Boozman	Hassan	Portman
Burr	Hatch	Reed
Cantwell	Heinrich	Risch
Capito	Heitkamp	Roberts
Cardin	Heller	Rounds
Carper	Hoeven	Rubio
Casey	Inhofe	Sasse
Cassidy	Isakson	Schatz
Cochran	Johnson	Scott
Collins	Kennedy	Shaheen
Coons	King	Shelby
Corker	Klobuchar	Strange
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Leahy	Tester
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Manchin	Tillis
Cruz	Markey	Toomey
Daines	McCain	Udall
Donnelly	McCaskey	Van Hollen
Durbin	McConnell	Warner
Enzi	Menendez	Whitehouse
Ernst	Merkley	Wicker
Feinstein	Moran	Wyden
Fischer	Murkowski	Young
Flake	Murphy	

NAYS—12

Baldwin	Duckworth	Sanders
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Schumer
Booker	Harris	Stabenow
Brown	Peters	Warren

NOT VOTING—2

Hirono Kaine

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 86, the nays are 12.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Terry Branstad, of Iowa, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Republic of China.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the following nominations en bloc, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Todd Philip Haskell, of Florida, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of the Congo and Tulinabo Salama Mushingi, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Senegal, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Haskell and Mushingi nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made laid upon the table en bloc and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 1185 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. HELLER. Thank you, Mr. President.

YUCCA MOUNTAIN

I rise today to once again speak out against the administration's proposal

to revive Yucca Mountain. I know I have said it before, and I will say it again: Yucca Mountain is dead. Nevada will not be our Nation's nuclear waste dump.

I conveyed that message in my meeting with Secretary Perry during his confirmation and reiterated it ahead of his visit to Yucca in March. My former colleague, Senator Harry Reid, was a powerful and outspoken opponent of Yucca and worked hard to make sure the project did not see the light of day. Now I am standing between this administration and Yucca. I say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle that I will be leading this fight.

This is a reckless proposal. Over the last 30 years, the Federal Government wasted billions of taxpayer dollars to design and permit Yucca Mountain, all without any signal that Nevada would consent to it. A State without a single nuclear power plant should not have to shoulder the entire Nation's nuclear waste burden. We will not be run over by the desires of other States that want to move the nuclear waste that they produce, that they create out of their own backyards and then put it into ours.

I will say it again: Nevada will not be our Nation's nuclear waste dump.

Last week's accident at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington State serves as a chilling reminder of what Nevada could have to deal with at Yucca Mountain. I was relieved that no one was harmed after the tunnel collapsed but believe it serves as a wake-up call to my colleagues.

We need to find a viable solution to our Nation's nuclear waste problem. In addition to the potential tragic loss of life, radiation exposure resulting from a similar event at Yucca Mountain could shatter Nevada's economy. This is not to mention the threat of transportation accidents along the proposed waste transportation routes.

What this means is that under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, we are looking at shipping 9,495 rail casks in 2,800 trains, and 2,650 trucks hauling one case each to Yucca Mountain over the next 50 years. If the capacity limit at Yucca is more than doubled as has been discussed with the Department of Energy, we would shift 21,909 rail casks in about 6,700 trains and 5,025 truck casks to Yucca Mountain.

So I ask my colleagues: Do you really believe that over the span of the next 50 years there will not be a single transportation accident with an ensuing radiological release?

Under the DOE's proposal, these shipments would use 22,000 miles of railroads, 7,000 miles of highways crossing over 44 States and the Tribal lands of at least 30 Native American Tribes, the District of Columbia, and 960 counties with a population of about 175 million people.

Between 10 and 12 million people live within the radiological region of influence for route shipments; that is, within one-half mile of these rail and high-

way routes. In effect, these rail and highway routes would impact most of the Nation's congressional districts, estimated at 330 districts.

For those who are not familiar with the West or Nevada, access to rail corridors or highways is often difficult because they are in such remote locations. If there were a spill or an accident, questions remain within the Department of Energy regarding their response time for emergency radiological exposure. This is not to mention the issue of private ownership of rail rights-of-way, making it uncertain who would even control accident sites.

What we do know is that the local communities would be the ones forced to suffer any type of long-term effects of radiation exposure. This is in a State that was home to our Nation's nuclear test site and the surrounding communities, which have suffered for years from resulting exposure.

I ask my colleagues: Should Nevada be forced to once more to shoulder this burden?

Secretary Perry, in response to last week's accident, acknowledged our Nation's problem with nuclear waste, saying that the nation could no longer kick the can down the road.

I do not believe that our Nation should continue to kick the can—or in this case the cask—down the road. We must find a long-term viable solution to our Nation's nuclear waste problem, one that is rooted in a consent-based siting.

I stand ready to work with my colleagues to make sure States have a voice in this process. Failure to do so will serve only to make this problem worse, risking future accidents similar to what we saw last week.

We can no longer afford to look backward at the failed proposals of the past and waste even more taxpayer dollars. Instead, we need to move forward on a real solution to a very real problem.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, the most important words in our Constitution are the first three words "We the People," written in beautiful script and written many times larger than the rest of the document so that even if you are across the room, you know what this Constitution stands for—not a government by and for the powerful, not a government by and for the privileged, but as President Lincoln so eloquently said in his Gettysburg Address, a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

As a "we the people" nation, we adhere to a core set of principles that

have guided us through good times as well as in dark moments. One of those key principles is the rule of law, that we are a nation in which not only is there the rule of law but in which no one is above the law.

If we walked out of this Chamber right now, proceeded through the double doorways, and down the steps of the Capitol, we would be staring at the beautiful building of the Supreme Court. The entire building symbolizes the role of justice in our society. As you look at that magnificent Supreme Court—the broad, marble steps leading up to the door—you see these simple words inscribed above: "Equal justice under the law." It is right there. You can almost see it from where I am standing now: "Equal justice under the law." That is the principle that is part of the ethic of every courthouse in America—from the smallest, most rural courthouse to the big city courthouse square. We see those same principles personified as Lady Justice. There she is, holding the scales, blindfolded so as to make sure everyone is treated equally.

Yet, over the past few months, we have been in a period in which we have been staring into the abyss of a constitutional crisis because this very core principle of "no one is above the law" and "equal justice under the law" has been under assault.

We have a President whose campaign team is under investigation because of substantial information that suggests the possibility of coordination and collaboration with Russia to change the outcome of the Presidential election—an assault on one of the most fundamental premises of a free society; that of free and equal elections.

We have a President who gave code-word classified information to an adversary—Russia—just a few days ago. We have confidential information, we have secret information, and we have code-word information at the very top. These are the most sensitive secrets of the American Government, and our President gave that information to Russia. If anyone else did that, he would be facing criminal charges.

We have a President who sought to shut down an investigation into one of his former team members—retired LTG Michael Flynn. We know Lieutenant General Flynn was in contact with Russian officials, and he was fired for lying about it. President Trump fired the head of the FBI because he would not drop the investigation into General Flynn's Russian connections and conduct.

We have a President, President Trump, who asked his Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General to develop a cover story to tell the American people the reason he fired the Director of the FBI, which is that he was upset about the Director of the FBI's treatment of his former Presidential opponent, Hillary Clinton.

If anyone believes the President woke up in the middle of the night and

decided to fire the Director of the FBI because he was concerned about the way Hillary Clinton was treated, then you have not been paying attention this last year and a half.

Now, if in the course of an investigation it is found that members of the Trump campaign coordinated or collaborated with the Russians to undermine the integrity of our elections, then that is treasonous conduct. If the President asked for, encouraged, or knew about such activity, then he would be party to such treasonous conduct. If the President used his office to attempt to shut down either the investigation of Michael Flynn or the investigation into the collaboration between the Trump campaign and the Russians, then that obstruction is potentially a serious crime of obstruction of justice, and it has to be fully pursued. If the President fired his former FBI Director in order to slow down or shut down these investigations, then that compiles the evidence of obstruction of justice.

These sets of facts point to serious misconduct. We have to fully investigate whether there was, in fact, such misconduct. That is why, for more than 3 months—going back to February 15 and Michael Flynn's resignation—I have been calling for a special prosecutor to conduct a thorough, impartial investigation into these matters. Over these 3 months, the case for why we need an independent special prosecutor has only grown stronger with each new event, each new story, each new piece of evidence.

If there were any lingering doubt about the need for a special prosecutor, that doubt was washed away last week when President Trump fired Director Comey for pursuing the investigation into the ties between the Trump campaign and Russia. That is why many of my colleagues and countless Americans all across the country stood up and demanded that no nominee fill Director Comey's shoes unless a special prosecutor had been appointed. So I was very pleased when last night Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein appointed such a special prosecutor.

Now, he will be coming to this Chamber to speak with us in a short period of time, later this afternoon. But whatever else transpired, stepping up and appointing that special prosecutor was the right thing to do. He announced the appointment of former FBI Director Robert Mueller as special counsel—the words “special counsel” and “special prosecutor” are largely interchangeable—with wide-ranging authority to conduct a thorough and independent investigation into “any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump; and, any matters that arose or may arise from the investigation; and, any other matters within the scope of the investigation.”

Last night's announcement was a tremendous victory for justice—the

principle of justice. It was a tremendous victory for a country with the rule of law. It was a tremendous victory for the principle that no individual is above the law in the United States of America.

We need to have confidence that there will be a robust investigation to get to the truth, no matter where that leads us. Certainly, our confidence has been improved by the appointment of the special prosecutor last night—and not just any individual, but an individual qualified and respected to lead such an investigation.

For 12 years, from just before the September 11, 2001, attacks and right through 2013, this man, Robert Mueller, led the FBI. He led it for the second longest period in U.S. history. He led it for 2 years more than the standard term for the head of the FBI. He is known as a thorough, by-the-book prosecutor who can't be influenced or intimidated, and I have every faith that he will conduct a professional, robust, and thorough investigation and give the American people the answers to all of these issues.

But as we applaud this strong movement toward justice, to truth, and to accountability, this strong stride in support of our “we the people” democratic Republic, we cannot rest. We need to make sure that Mr. Mueller, as a special prosecutor, gets every resource he needs to aggressively pursue justice and the complete independence he needs to undertake this incredibly important task.

At the same time, we have to keep pressing here in the Senate, encouraging our Intelligence Committee, as well as the House Intelligence Committee, to aggressively pursue information. We cannot cede our obligation to represent and fight for the best interests of the American people or for our “we the people” Nation, and that includes speaking truth to power and holding our leaders accountable for their actions.

Mr. Mueller will have, as I noted, wide-ranging authority to conduct his investigation. His investigation and the investigation here in the Senate by the Senate Intelligence Committee will be looking at a number of connections that have occurred over the course of this last year and a half.

Now, we know a lot about what the Russians did to hack the American Presidential election. The intelligence community told us in a report this past January that, with “high confidence” Russian President Vladimir Putin “ordered and influenced the campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election” and that he did so in order to “undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process, denigrate [Hillary] Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency.”

The report goes on to say that the Russian Government “aspired to help President-elect Trump's election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him.”

We know many of the elements of this aggressive Russian campaign. They used the resource “Russia Today” to spread fake news stories, to develop those stories, and to publicize those stories. They hired thousands of internet trolls to comment in social media on the affairs in America, as if they were Americans weighing in. They proceeded to hack the DNC, or the Democratic National Committee, files and the Clinton campaign files, and they released damaging documents from those hacks. They used bots; that is, remote computers instructed by code that was placed onto those computers to weigh in on social media as if they were people weighing in. So we had thousands of machines weighing in with comments as if they were individuals weighing in. Why did they do that? To take the fake news story and proceed to amplify it with comments from thousands of trolls and, probably, tens of thousands of bots, in order to get those issues trending so they would appear in the everyday news that Americans see. We are talking about a massive campaign of interference in the Presidential election.

What we need to know is whether anyone on the Trump campaign was connected, in any possible way, to these activities. To find that out, we have to investigate the growing web of connections between members of the Trump campaign and Russia.

Just consider some of the connections that have been explored already in the press. One individual is Carter Page, who served as President Trump's foreign policy adviser on the campaign trail. Mr. Page lived in Russia for 3 years while working for Merrill Lynch. He participated in several deals during his time there with Gazprom, the Kremlin-owned energy giant whose chairman was Vladimir Putin's deputy while Prime Minister.

He became friendly and emailed back and forth for months with Victor Podobnyy, a Russian spy who was recorded on tape saying he was trying to recruit Page.

Last year, while employed as a member of the Trump campaign, Mr. Page traveled to Moscow to deliver a speech bashing U.S. policy toward Russia, saying: “Washington and other Western powers have impeded potential progress through their often hypocritical focus on ideas such as democratization, inequality, corruption and regime change.”

Then there is Paul Manafort, the former chairman of the President's campaign. He was hired to manage the Republican Convention and to wrangle delegates, but he was promoted to campaign chairman and chief strategist, until he resigned because of his questionable foreign dealings.

From 2004 until 2014, Manafort worked as an adviser to the Ukrainian President, Viktor Yanukovich, a pro-Russian strongman who, over the years, adopted policies that moved his country away from the European

Union and closer to Russia. Manafort is regularly credited with helping Yanukovych win the Presidency in 2010.

In 2014, a revolution rose up against Yanukovych, and he was ousted from power. He now lives in exile in Russia. But Mr. Manafort continued working in Ukraine, helping rebrand the former President's Party of Regions as an opposition party, mostly from eastern Ukraine, which advocates for stronger relations with Russia.

Then, we have Roger Stone, President Trump's longtime ally, friend, and adviser since they first met back in 1979. That is three-plus decades. Ironically, it was Mr. Stone who introduced Donald Trump to former President Richard Nixon back in the 1980s, and there are stories in the media that Mr. Stone pressured the President to fire Director Comey.

Over the years, Mr. Stone has appeared many times in *Russia Today*, the Kremlin's English language news network that developed and publicized fake news stories during last year's Presidential election.

In his appearances, Mr. Stone regularly criticized the U.S. intelligence community, he attacked our media, he attacked our free press, he praised Russia and its policies, and he even praised WikiLeaks—the organization responsible for releasing massive amounts of confidential and damaging documents about our Nation's intelligence services and capabilities.

More than that, Mr. Stone has bragged about his communications with hackers—hackers like Guccifer 2.0. And who is Guccifer 2.0? The individual responsible for hacking the DNC and releasing emails during the campaign.

Another person whose connections to both the Trump campaign and Russia will be looked at is our former colleague and now our Attorney General. During the course of his confirmation hearings, Mr. Sessions misled fellow Senators about his interactions with Russian officials. When asked what he would do as Attorney General if he learned that anyone connected with the Trump campaign had communicated with the Russian Government, he said:

I'm not aware of any of those activities . . . I have been called a surrogate at a time or two in that campaign and I did not have communications with the Russians.

But he did have communications, meeting with Russian Ambassador Kislyak on two separate occasions last year.

Then, we have Michael Flynn, a very major part of the connections between the Trump campaign and Russia—a retired lieutenant general and appointed to be National Security Advisor by President Trump. He was intimately involved in the series of events that led us to yesterday, with the appointment of a special prosecutor.

Beginning in February 2016, General Flynn served as an adviser to the

Trump campaign, and he was even considered as a potential running mate for President Trump. As we know, he followed President Trump into the White House as National Security Advisor. But as I noted before, that role was short-lived, as his Russian connections came to light.

Back in 2015, he was paid to attend a 10th anniversary gala for Russian TV and sat at a table with Mr. Putin. He didn't disclose this on his security forms.

During the Trump administration's transition, he talked with Ambassador Kislyak by phone, including one call on the very day that President Obama ordered sanctions against Russia as punishment. Punishment for what? Punishment for interfering with the American election.

When that information was discovered, the White House contended that General Flynn's conversations with the Russian Ambassador were nothing more than ironing out logistics for an eventual call between the President and Vladimir Putin.

Even Vice President PENCE went on the record defending Flynn, telling CBS News that the two "did not discuss anything having to do with the United States' decision to expel diplomats or impose censure against Russia."

But General Flynn's conversation with the Ambassador was picked up during routine surveillance of the Russian Ambassador. And what were they discussing? They were discussing the sanctions President Obama was placing on Russia. Why did he place those sanctions? Because of Russian interference in the election.

Acting Attorney General Sally Yates made it known that she warned the White House that Flynn was lying to the Vice President and that he was compromised. She met twice with Dan McGahn, the White House Counsel, to warn him about Flynn. But in exchange for making sure the White House knew about the fact that the National Security Advisor was compromised and then lied to the Vice President, she was fired—fired by the President.

Eighteen days after Sally Yates' warning, Michael Flynn resigned, after the Washington Post revealed that he had, in fact, discussed sanctions with Ambassador Kislyak.

Now, according to his lawyer, "General Flynn certainly has a story to tell, and he very much wants to tell it."

Well, I hope, as the Senate Intelligence Committee and as the special prosecutor pursue the investigations, that he will have every chance to tell it and will tell it with a fullness and an accuracy that will be complete.

That is the web of visible connections we already know about, and they suggest the possibility of coordination, consultation, and collaboration with the Russians to influence the American elections. We have to get to the bottom of whether, in fact, that is the case.

Did it go beyond a series of conversations to actual coordination, consultation, and collaboration? This is what we need to know.

Now, the President says that there is no "there," there. That is why we need an investigation, in order to find out. The President has called this a witch hunt. An investigation, I would convey to President Trump, is not a witch hunt. An investigation is pursuit of the truth. An investigation is in the highest tradition of equal justice for all.

A very large development, as we all now know, occurred last week with the firing of FBI Director James Comey, who was leading the Bureau's investigation into these matters. Director Comey confirmed while testifying in the House on March 20 that the FBI was, in fact, conducting an investigation into Trump's campaign—something we now know really bothered the President. But at the outset, the President's White House claimed that Comey's firing was about the Director's handling of the Clinton email investigations, not because of the Russia investigation. That story on its face caused eyebrows to raise across the country. Did people really believe the President woke up and was determined to right a wrong because the FBI Director had unfairly treated Hillary Clinton? Yet he asked his team to develop this story to share it with the American people. He asked his team—his Attorney General and his Deputy Attorney General—to essentially put out a story to mislead the American people. That in itself deeply damages the integrity of the White House.

This cover story also claimed that Comey was fired because he lost the trust of the rank-and-file FBI agents. Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe came to the Hill to testify before the Intelligence Committee last week, and he conveyed that this is simply not true.

The cover story also involved Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein being the instigator of the firing by preparing this memo on his own and recommending it to the President. That also turned out to be a part of the deception, and the President himself made that clear, taking responsibility that it was his decision to fire, not a decision based on a recommendation that came from Rosenstein.

In an NBC News interview with Lester Holt, President Trump admitted that he "was going to fire regardless of recommendation" and that he was thinking of "this Russia thing," as he called it—"this Russia thing"—when he finally decided to fire the Director. He also told Lester Holt that he had asked Director Comey three times whether he himself was under investigation. The President admitted on camera to the American people that he fired the man in charge of the investigation against his campaign because he was frustrated that the investigation was still going on.

The American people received reports subsequently that the President

had asked Director Comey to pledge his loyalty to the President. This is news report of the memo that Director Comey wrote after meeting with the President. We find that the FBI Director is not going to be loyal to anyone but Lady Justice.

The President had the audacity to publicly threaten Director Comey after firing him. “James Comey,” said the President, “better hope there are no ‘tapes’ of our conversations before he starts leaking to the press!”

Attempting to intimidate future statements and possible statements in an investigation after a person has been fired is another factor that is totally inappropriate. Everyone with any shred of common sense knows such intimidation is inappropriate, but in the context of a criminal investigation, it may be more than inappropriate.

We don’t know if there actually were tapes. Our Intelligence Committee has requested the memos Director Comey wrote on his various conversations with the President. Remember, this is an experienced, seasoned FBI agent-turned-Director who has spent his life documenting conversations. It is considered to be a high level of integrity when such information is recorded in this fashion. Those memos carry a lot of weight. Some are classified, some are unclassified. They need to be provided immediately to the Senate Intelligence Committee, and if they aren’t provided, then the Intelligence Committee needs to subpoena them and needs to subpoena the tapes. If they exist, they need to be delivered. If they are not tapes but they are transcripts, they need to be delivered. If they are not tapes but a thumb drive or they exist on a piece of hardware, they need to be delivered, and our special prosecutor, Mr. Mueller, needs to have them as well.

I think that as one steps back from this incredible amount of information—the information about how Russia hacked the campaign, not just hacking into the DNC and Hillary Clinton’s campaign but then releasing that information in strategic moments; hiring a thousand individuals to comment in social media as if they were American citizens; establishing a botnet of computers to weigh in as if they were people to amplify this false social media, to get it trending and to get it into the mainstream news—when we consider all of this, we know how terribly wrong it was, and we have to learn every piece about what went on in order to make sure we are in the best prepared way to stop it from ever happening again.

We need to make sure we are in the best possible place to ensure that we can assist other democratic republics in making sure they are not victims of the Russians. We need to make sure that if any American, no matter who he or she is, collaborated or coordinated with the Russians in this effort to hack our campaigns, that they are prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, our law enforcement officers and the families who support them give so much in service to our communities. As we were tragically reminded again last week—and this happens in far too many places, in far too many States—some make the ultimate sacrifice to keep us safe.

Last Friday in Kirkersville, OH, Police Chief Steve DiSario responded to a report of a man with a gun at a nursing home. Chief DiSario did what so many first responders do when most of us in the public run away from danger: He ran toward it. He arrived at the Pine Kirk Care Center to protect his community and was killed in the line of duty by a gunman who also took the lives of two nursing home employees. Chief DiSario was 36. He had six children and a seventh on the way.

Our thoughts and our prayers are with Chief DiSario’s family and the families of all of our first responders, who worry each day that their loved ones may not return home. Think about that. For soldiers, marines, sailors, police officers, and firefighters, so often when they kiss their spouse goodbye and go to work, there is always the anxiety at home. It is not just the sacrifice that our soldiers and our military personnel and our police officers make; it is the sacrifice their families make too.

Sadly, Police Chief DiSario wasn’t the only Ohio officer to lay down his life this year. In January, Officer David J. Fahey of the Cleveland Police Department was working the scene of an accident on I-90 and was struck and killed in a despicable act of hit-and-run.

This week in Washington, we honor the five Ohio officers killed in the line of duty last year. Aaron Christian of the Chesapeake Police Department was killed in a car accident while on patrol. While conducting traffic, Trooper Kenneth Velez of Elyria was killed by a driver under the influence of drugs. Officer Sean Johnson was the first officer to be killed in the line of duty in the town of Hilliard when he succumbed to injuries from a motorcycle accident during a training exercise. Officer Steven Smith was shot and killed during a SWAT standoff in Columbus. Officer Thomas Cottrell, Jr., of Danville was killed in a heinous and cowardly ambush. Each of these losses is a tragedy for a family, for a community, and for fellow police officers.

As we honor the work and sacrifices made by law enforcement throughout Police Week, we need to offer more than kind words; we need action to support law enforcement as they work to keep our communities safe.

Yesterday, I was talking to Police Chief Richard Biehl of Dayton and Youngstown Police Chief Robert Lees about what more we should do to support officers and their families. This

week, we have unanimously passed several pieces of bipartisan legislation that will provide new support to the officers who protect us and the families who sacrifice alongside them.

The Public Safety Officers’ Benefits Improvement Act, which Senator GRASSLEY introduced, will put pressure on the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the DOJ to speed up claims processing so families of disabled officers or fallen officers get their benefits more quickly.

We passed the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act, introduced by Indiana Senators DONNELLY and YOUNG, to help law enforcement agencies establish or enhance mental health services, like peer monitoring pilot programs and crisis hotlines, for their officers. I learned about this bill from my friend Jay McDonald from Marion, OH, whose advocacy for police officers and their families makes a huge difference for Ohio’s law enforcement communities. He has been the president of the Ohio Fraternal Order of Police for some time.

We approved Senator CORNYN’s American Law Enforcement Heroes Act of 2017, which would allow local police departments to use Federal grant money to hire veterans as law enforcement officers. It is a bipartisan, commonsense idea that would open new doors for those who served our communities and our Nation in the military and who have accrued and developed skills that will serve well their communities in police work.

We have a solemn obligation to the children of fallen officers whose lives are forever changed because of the heroism of their mother or father. The bipartisan Children of Fallen Heroes Scholarship Act—which I have introduced with Senators CASEY and DONNELLY, two Democrats, as well as two Republican Senators, TOOMEY and COLLINS—would increase access to Pell grants for the surviving children of law enforcement who lay down their lives for their communities. It would ensure that all children of fallen officers are eligible for the maximum Federal Pell grant. Of course, we can’t repay the debt we owe these families, but we can ease the burden on their children as they prepare for their future.

We need to do everything we can to ensure that officers and family members get the benefits and help they deserve. We also need to do more to give officers the tools they need to protect themselves. This week, I joined a group of Senators calling for full funding of the Bulletproof Vest Partnership.

I have written to the Department of Justice thanking them for their work so far and urging them to speed up distributing funding we passed as part of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. The bipartisan bill created the Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Grant Program to provide funding to police departments to train first responders as they deal with opioid-related incidents.

More and more officers are being exposed to fentanyl out in the field. Just this week in Eastern Ohio, an officer in East Liverpool was the victim of an accidental fentanyl overdose. He survived, but the situation was perilous. We need to make sure officers have the equipment they need to handle this deadly opioid look-alike—only more toxic—safely.

Our law enforcement officers put their lives on the line each day to protect us. This Police Week, we owe them more than gratitude; we must show support to the selfless men and women who serve our communities and country every single day, and we must support their actions, their lives, and their families.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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

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

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to talk about the Russia questions that are on the minds of so many Americans. We had—I think, in the midst of all of the debate and controversy and genuine concern across the country—some good news yesterday when it was announced that Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein had made the decision to appoint a special counsel and, in this case, former FBI Director Mueller. That was good news because, No. 1, there was a special counsel who would undertake a review of these questions and in an independent fashion. I think people across not just Washington but even across the country were heartened by the fact that it was someone of the caliber, the experience, and the dedicated law enforcement commitment that Director Mueller demonstrated in his years with the FBI as Director, as a prosecutor. That was good news.

We are grateful for that. I know we will have a chance in a little while to talk to the Deputy Attorney General about these issues. I think we have to examine a couple more questions that arise.

So to review, on January 26, Acting Attorney General Sally Yates informed the Trump administration that General Flynn had apparently lied about having conversations with the Russian Ambassador, warning that it could open him up to blackmail. On May 8, Yates testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee and stated, contrary to claims by White House officials, that Flynn had discussed Russian sanc-

tions in his those conversations with the Russian Ambassador.

On January 27, President Trump hosted Director Comey at the White House, where the New York Times reported he asked Director Comey to pledge his loyalty. Director Comey reportedly promised only honesty.

On January 30, President Trump fired Acting Attorney General Yates, claiming her dismissal was over a matter unrelated to Russia.

On February 13, fully 18 days after the White House was originally informed by Yates of General Flynn's misconduct, General Flynn was relieved of his job after it became public that he lied about his conversations with the Russian Ambassador.

The day after General Flynn was pushed out, the President reportedly summoned Director Comey to a private meeting in which he took the extraordinary step of asking him to drop the FBI investigation into Flynn.

In March and again in May, Director Comey publicly confirmed that Trump associates were under investigation for possible coordination with Russia to interfere in the election. On May 9, President Trump fired Director Comey. His administration initially said it was based on a recommendation from Attorney General Sessions, who was supposed to be recused from anything to do with the Russia investigation, and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who reportedly had been asked by Director Comey just days earlier for additional funding for the Russia investigation. But then the President himself revealed he fired Director Comey explicitly because of the Russia investigation.

The day after, the President tweeted a veiled threat that Director Comey "better hope that there are no 'tapes'" of their conversation, raising the question of whether the President was surreptitiously recording his Oval Office meetings and whether tapes exist.

While it may be unrelated, it also bears mentioning that, this week, it was also reported that President Trump revealed highly classified information to Russian officials in a private Oval Office meeting—information that could jeopardize critical intelligence assets and risk undermining relationships with allies.

I think there are some serious questions, even with the special counsel who has been named, even with two Intelligence Committees reviewing these matters. I would hope that, in addition to those reviews that are being undertaken—those investigations—that we also have an independent commission to get all of the answers we need so that we can ensure the American people that this will never happen again—that no foreign government, in this case, a foreign adversary, can interfere in an election at any time in our future.

That guarantee will not be ironclad unless we know exactly what happened and why it happened, and then we take

a series of steps to prevent it from happening. We should be very clear with the Russian Federation that if they do this again, they will be sanctioned, and there will be a consequence in response to their actions. We won't be able to do any of that unless we find the answers.

Here are a couple of basic questions I hope would be a part of the deliberations, not just of the two committees or other committees that might review this but also the deliberations and work of the special counsel and his team.

The first question is, Why does the President believe that the Russian election interference investigation is baseless, which is contrary to the unanimous finding of 17 U.S. intelligence agencies? These agencies issued a "high confidence" assessment of the determination they made. That is a technical term in the intelligence circles that they don't use lightly.

Based upon the findings of those intelligence agencies and that finding being of high confidence, why does the President continue to question or even undermine that determination?

Question No. 2 is, Why did Attorney General Sessions, who had to recuse himself from the Russian investigation, weigh in on the firing of the FBI Director responsible for that very investigation? That is a question, I think, a number of people are asking.

Question No. 3 is, Can the Justice Department's political leaders—individuals who have just come in with this administration and officials in the Justice Department—be trusted not to interfere in the ongoing FBI investigation? That is a question.

Question No. 4 is, Why, immediately after firing Director Comey and amid the uproar about interference in the Russian investigation that it created, did the President convene a private meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister and the Russian Ambassador in the Oval Office and allow the Russian state media—the Soviet-era state media entity—to cover that meeting while keeping out the U.S. media? I think that is a question that a lot of people have.

Question No. 5 is, Why did the President reveal highly classified information to the Russian Federation, according to the reporting by the Washington Post and others, during this meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister and the Russian Ambassador, and what are the implications of that disclosure? That is something that we need to have answers to.

At least these five questions—you could add many more—are critically important questions. In some respects, there are even more urgent questions in front of us, and I will focus a little bit on those today—basically, three, I guess.

No. 1, did the President intentionally interfere with the ongoing FBI investigation into his associates, people that were on his campaign or on the campaign or working in the government now? The interference question

seems more likely than not based upon the reporting, but we have to know for sure, one way or the other: Did the President intentionally interfere with an ongoing FBI investigation?

No. 2, are any such efforts to interfere ongoing?

If the answer to the first question is yes—and we don't know for certain if it is question yes, but if it is yes—if there was intentional interference with the investigation by the President, the second question would be, Are there any such efforts to interfere that are ongoing?

No. 3, do they extend—meaning this potential alleged interference—past the FBI inquiry, to the investigations in the Senate and the House of Representatives? I think that is a question that is rather urgent as well.

Will this attempt to interfere, or alleged attempt to interfere, carry over into other investigations?

In essence now, we have three inquiries. One is the House Intelligence Committee, the other is the Senate Intelligence Committee, and the third would be Special Counsel Mueller's investigation. They are all critically important.

I would hope that we could add a fourth to that, which would be an independent commission, like the 9/11 Commission, where we came to definitive conclusions with regard to what happened on 9/11. Then, added to those conclusions, there were a series of recommendations so that we could prevent another 9/11. The same could be said here—that we want to make sure we get answers to these questions, have conclusions made, have accountability with regard to those conclusions, but then have a series of recommendations about how to prevent Russian interference or the interference of any foreign adversary in our election ever again.

Director Comey himself warned about the danger of undue influence on FBI investigations in an exchange during a May 3 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing. In this case, it was Senator HIRONO, a Democratic Senator from Hawaii, who asked if the Attorney General or senior Justice Department officials had ever ordered the FBI to halt an investigation.

Interestingly, here is what Director Comey replied to that question: "Not in my experience," meaning not in his experience does he know of an instance where the Justice Department officials interfered with an FBI investigation.

I will read it again.

Not in my experience. Because it would be a big deal to tell the FBI to stop doing something.

Then, he continues on, and it picks up with this:

[W]ithout an appropriate purpose. . . . a situation where we were told to stop something for a political reason, that would be a very big deal. It's not happened in my experience.

That is the now former FBI Director saying that there is no precedence for

the idea that the Justice Department would ask the FBI to take an action, which would be interference.

Director Comey was talking about the Department of Justice in this case—actions by the Department of Justice to interfere with an FBI investigation. In retrospect, perhaps a better question would have been whether the political interference he thought would be a "very big deal" might have been coming directly from the Oval Office. It is essential that we get to the bottom of this—a number of these questions.

An issue of this importance requires that the full investigative power of the Federal Government be brought to bear. The House and Senate Intel Committees are doing their investigation, as I said. The FBI investigation continues as well, despite concerns about independence in the wake of Director Comey's firing.

I hope, and I expect, that the next FBI Director will be someone who will be as independent, as capable, and as committed as Director Mueller is as the new special counsel.

We know there are dedicated professionals running these investigations. It has long been my belief that these extraordinary circumstances demand even more. I have been repeating for some time that we need a greater level of independence to insulate this critically important investigation from any suspicion of partisan interference. That is why I have been calling—for many weeks now, since early March—for a special counsel. I am glad the Justice Department now agrees with me.

Suffice it to say that we have a lot more work to do. Ultimately, this will be the work of everyone here, even if you are not a member of the Intel Committee or any other committee that is doing work that is directly relevant to this because, ultimately, the Congress has to take actions to get to the bottom of these questions but also be part of the process, at least, of imposing accountability and, also, especially the Congress is going to have to play a major role—the leading role—in making sure we put in place policies and procedures and laws that prevent this from ever happening again.

I hope the administration will join us in taking every step necessary to get to the bottom of these questions and to insist and to ensure that this never happens again to any American election. That is not just a goal, that has to be a guarantee as a result of this process. If the administration is not committed to that, I am not sure what they are committed to.

To take lightly or to ignore a problem that is this great and this serious, to undermine our democracy is, I think, to put at risk the very foundation of our Nation as a nation of laws and not of men, a nation that is committed to the rule of law.

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.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the nomination of John Sullivan to be Deputy Secretary of State.

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

The clerk will report the nomination. The bill clerk read the nomination of John J. Sullivan, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of State.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

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 nomination of John J. Sullivan, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of State.

Mitch McConnell, Cory Gardner, Tom Cotton, Roy Blunt, Jeff Flake, John Cornyn, John Barrasso, Ron Johnson, James E. Risch, Joni Ernst, John Thune, Mike Rounds, Orrin G. Hatch, Bob Corker, David Perdue, John Hoeven, James M. Inhofe.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the cloture motion be waived.

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of the Branstad nomination.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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 up to 10 minutes each.

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

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

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, for purposes of today's votes, I want to announce that had I voted on Thursday,

May 18, 2017, I would have voted no on confirmation of Rachel Brand to be Associate Attorney General, and I would have voted yea on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 55, the nomination of Terry Branstad, of Iowa, to be Ambassador to China.●

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, during this week, National Police Week, I honor all those who serve to keep us safe. I honor three Maryland officers who lost their lives in the line of duty in 2016. Corporal Jack Colson of Prince George's County Police Department, Senior Deputy Patrick Dailey, and Deputy First Class Mark Logsdon, both of Harford County Sheriff's office, all dedicated their lives to making Maryland safe. We thank them for their sacrifice, and we thank their families, friends, and fellow officers. They will never be forgotten, and they deserve to be honored not just this week, but every day.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

IDAHO ANNE FRANK HUMAN RIGHTS MEMORIAL

● Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, today I wish to commend Idahoans and specifically the Boise community for coming together so quickly to fight hate speech and related vandalism.

Kindness, support, and respect run deep in Idaho. The response to the recent vandalism of the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial in Boise, ID, is the most recent example of the depth of compassion in Idahoans. Since the recent vandalism, considerable resources have poured in to repair and enhance the memorial. Rather than responding with anger and hate, Idaho is moving forward with a positive spirit of renewal and inclusiveness. Dan Prinzing, executive director of the Wassmuth Center for Human Rights that built the memorial with support from the Carr Foundation and others and now partners with Boise Parks and Recreation to maintain the memorial, said, "An act of hate by an individual is not us, the community's response to the act is what defines who we are and the values we share. Now what does that do for us? It emboldens the message of the Memorial and reinforces that our work is not done."

The Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial was dedicated to the public 15 years ago to offer a place for visitors to consider and reflect on human rights and inspire engagement with others about the issue. The memorial is a beautiful and thought-provoking resource, which includes a statue of Anne Frank, quotes and excerpts of her writings, as well as a wall of inspiring quotes. The love and care, including the support of Idaho students and their families, that went into this memorial's creation is prevailing upon its

restoration and contributing to ongoing human rights discussions. Among the many quotes highlighted at the memorial is the following from Mother Teresa, "Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless."

I commend all those who are coming together to counter the acts of hateful vandalism with kindness that will continue to echo through our communities and Nation.●

TRIBUTE TO PAMELA ROSSETTI

● Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, today I wish to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing and congratulating Ms. Pamela Rossetti on her 35 years of remarkable service as a fifth and sixth-grade teacher at Lincoln Street School in the Exeter, NH, School District. Throughout her career, Ms. Rossetti has gone above and beyond to meet the needs of her students, as well as her larger school community, by serving as an adviser on a number of committees and taking a leadership role in special projects throughout her tenure. The State of New Hampshire owes her a debt of gratitude for her service.

Ms. Rossetti graduated with her B.A. from Notre Dame College in Manchester, NH, in 1981. She later received her masters of education from Leslie College in Cambridge, MA, with a concentration in integrated teaching through the arts. She was hired by the Exeter School District in 1982 as a sixth-grade teacher. After 2 years, she began teaching in the fifth grade, where she has taught for 33 years.

Throughout her career, Ms. Rossetti has received accolades for her service. In 1983, she received a commendation from New Hampshire's Governor John H. Sununu in recognition of her work with a colleague to create an American citizenship course. She has been a member of both the science and social studies committees for the Exeter School District and served on a number of Lincoln Street School committees, including the arts and health committees. She has also been a mentor teacher and a trainer for the school district's Intel Teach to the Future Program, which focuses on integrating technology into curriculum.

Ms. Rossetti has touched many lives in the Exeter School District, including my son Ben's. Ben experiences disabilities that leave him unable to communicate verbally. Ms. Rossetti was Ben's fifth-grade classroom teacher, and, shortly after the school year, she called me to tell me how smart Ben was. While my family had always thought that Ben was smart and funny, it was incredibly reassuring to know that an objective—and caring—educator thought so as well. She went on to tell me how she had assessed Ben's understanding of sophisticated content material.

Ms. Rossetti's observation impressed me because, in a classroom of students where Ben received support from a spe-

cial education team, Ms. Rossetti still took the time to get to know him and every one of her students as individuals. Because of her ability to do this, Ms. Rossetti has been able to customize her approach to her students and foster their growth and development. Many of Ms. Rossetti's students have been impacted by this level of support and have stayed in contact with her through the years.

The Exeter School District and all of New Hampshire have benefitted greatly from Ms. Rossetti's devotion and service. On behalf of my colleagues and the U.S. Congress, I thank Ms. Pamela Rossetti for her unrelenting commitment to support every one of her students, as well as the entire school community, through her 35 years as a teacher, and I wish her the very best in her retirement.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Ridgway, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

In executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:02 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, without amendment:

S. 419. An act to require adequate reporting on the Public Safety Officers' Benefits program, and for other purposes.

S. 583. An act to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to authorize COPS grantees to use grant funds to hire veterans as career law enforcement officers, and for other purposes.

At 11:46 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it request the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 194. An act to ensure the effective processing of mail by Federal agencies, and for other purposes.

H.R. 195. An act to amend title 44, United States Code, to restrict the distribution of free printed copies of the Federal Register to Members of Congress and other officers and employees of the United States, and for other purposes.

H.R. 653. An act to amend title 5, United States Code, to protect unpaid interns in the Federal Government from workplace harassment and discrimination, and for other purposes.

H.R. 672. An act to require continued and enhanced annual reporting to Congress in

the Annual Report on International Religious Freedom on anti-Semitic incidents in Europe, the safety and security of European Jewish communities, and the efforts of the United States to partner with European governments, the European Union, and civil society groups, to combat anti-Semitism, and for other purposes.

H.R. 984. An act to extend Federal recognition to the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, the Chickahominy Indian Tribe—Eastern Division, the Upper Mattaponi Tribe, the Rappahannock Tribe, Inc., the Monacan Indian Nation, and the Nansemond Indian Tribe.

H.R. 1177. An act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to release on behalf of the United States the condition that certain lands conveyed to the City of Old Town, Maine, be used for a municipal airport, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1677. An act to halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people, encourage a negotiated political settlement, and hold Syrian human rights abusers accountable for their crimes.

H.R. 2154. An act to rename the Red River Valley Agricultural Research Center in Fargo, North Dakota, as the Edward T. Schafer Agricultural Research Center.

H.R. 2169. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to enhance information sharing in the Department of Homeland Security State, Local, and Regional Fusion Center Initiative, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2227. An act to modernize Government information technology, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2266. An act to amend title 28 of the United States Code to authorize the appointment of additional bankruptcy judges; and for other purposes.

H.R. 2281. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to reauthorize the Border Enforcement Security Task Force program within the Department of Homeland Security, 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. 194. An act to ensure the effective processing of mail by Federal agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 195. An act to amend title 44, United States Code, to restrict the distribution of free printed copies of the Federal Register to Members of Congress and other officers and employees of the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 653. An act to amend title 5, United States Code, to protect unpaid interns in the Federal Government from workplace harassment and discrimination, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 672. An act to require continued and enhanced annual reporting to Congress in the Annual Report on International Religious Freedom on anti-Semitic incidents in Europe, the safety and security of European Jewish communities, and the efforts of the United States to partner with European governments, the European Union, and civil society groups, to combat anti-Semitism, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H.R. 984. An act to extend Federal recognition to the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, the Chickahominy Indian Tribe—Eastern Division, the Upper Mattaponi Tribe, the Rappahannock Tribe, Inc., the Monacan Indian Na-

tion, and the Nansemond Indian Tribe; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

H.R. 1177. An act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to release on behalf of the United States the condition that certain lands conveyed to the City of Old Town, Maine, be used for a municipal airport, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

H.R. 1677. An act to halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people, encourage a negotiated political settlement, and hold Syrian human rights abusers accountable for their crimes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H.R. 2154. An act to rename the Red River Valley Agricultural Research Center in Fargo, North Dakota, as the Edward T. Schafer Agricultural Research Center; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

H.R. 2169. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to enhance information sharing in the Department of Homeland Security State, Local, and Regional Fusion Center Initiative, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 2227. An act to modernize Government information technology, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 2266. An act to amend title 28 of the United States Code to authorize the appointment of additional bankruptcy judges; and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

H.R. 2281. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to reauthorize the Border Enforcement Security Task Force program within the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. JOHNSON, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with amendments:

S. 582. A bill to reauthorize the Office of Special Counsel, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115-74).

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. GRASSLEY for the Committee on the Judiciary.

Amul R. Thapar, of Kentucky, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

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 Mrs. SHAHEEN:

S. 1171. A bill to keep girls in school around the world, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. MURPHY, Ms. COLLINS,

Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MERKLEY, and Mr. WYDEN):

S. 1172. A bill to impose sanctions with respect to foreign persons responsible for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. PORTMAN:

S. 1173. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit taking minors across State lines in circumvention of laws requiring the involvement of parents in abortion decisions; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. LEAHY:

S. 1174. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide that a deduction equal to fair market value shall be allowed for charitable contributions of literary, musical, artistic, or scholarly compositions created by the donor; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. SULLIVAN (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, and Ms. MURKOWSKI):

S. 1175. A bill to protect Federal, State, and local public safety officers; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. KING (for himself, Mr. BURR, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. WARNER, Mr. WICKER, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 1176. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to establish a simplified income-driven repayment plan, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BLUNT:

S. 1177. A bill to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to require the annual human rights reports to include information on the institutionalization of children and the subjection of children to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, unnecessary detention, and denial of the right to life, liberty, and the security of persons; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. BLUNT (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. WICKER, Mr. BURR, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. COTTON, Ms. WARREN, Mr. KING, and Mr. COONS):

S. 1178. A bill to realign structures and reallocate resources in the Federal Government in keeping with the core belief that families are the best protection for children and the bedrock of any society to bolster United States diplomacy targeted at ensuring that every child can grow up in a permanent, safe, nurturing, and loving family, and to ensure that intercountry adoption to the United States becomes a viable and fully developed option for providing families for children in need, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. SULLIVAN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. FRANKEN, Ms. BALDWIN, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 1179. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to inter in national cemeteries individuals who supported the United States in Laos during the Vietnam War era, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mrs. SHAHEEN:

S. 1180. A bill to advance the integration of clean distributed energy into electric grids, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. HELLER (for himself and Mr. WARNER):

S. 1181. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Agriculture to expedite access to certain Federal land under

the administrative jurisdiction of each Secretary for good Samaritan search-and-recovery missions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. YOUNG (for himself, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. COTTON, Mr. TESTER, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. MANCHIN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. CARPER, Mr. KING, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. MORAN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. PETERS, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. GRAHAM, Ms. WARREN, Mr. NELSON, Mr. DAINES, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. ROUNDS, and Mr. ISAKSON):

S. 1182. A bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative coins in recognition of the 100th anniversary of The American Legion; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. DONNELLY (for himself and Mr. GARDNER):

S. 1183. A bill to establish a third-party quality system assessment program; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. CARPER, Mr. UDALL, Mr. FRANKEN, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 1184. A bill to amend the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 to require individuals nominated or appointed to Senate-confirmed positions or to positions of a confidential or policymaking character to disclose certain types of contributions made or solicited by, or on behalf of, the individuals; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 1185. A bill to increase public safety by punishing and deterring firearms trafficking; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. KENNEDY):

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; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself, Mr. TOOMEY, and Mr. RUBIO):

S. 1187. A bill to designate the area between the intersections of International Drive, Northwest and Van Ness Street, Northwest and International Drive, Northwest and International Place, Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, as "Liu Xiaobo Plaza", and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Ms. BALDWIN):

S. 1188. A bill to amend title XXIX of the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the program under such title relating to lifespan respite care; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BENNET (for himself, Mr. GARDNER, and Mr. FRANKEN):

S. 1189. A bill to provide greater controls and restrictions on revolving door lobbying; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. CASEY, Mr. FLAKE, Mr. NELSON, Mr.

RUBIO, Ms. WARREN, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. BURR, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. Res. 172. A resolution designating May 2017 as "Older Americans Month"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. WICKER, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. MORAN, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. JOHNSON, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. CARPER, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. HATCH, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. STRANGE, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. KING, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. SULLIVAN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mrs. ERNST, Mr. NELSON, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. PETERS, Mr. COONS, Mr. BROWN, Mr. KENNEDY, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. BURR, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. DAINES, Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. YOUNG, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. SCOTT, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. COTTON, Mr. RUBIO, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CASEY, Mr. TOOMEY, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mr. ENZI, Mr. MARKEY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. CORKER, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. LEE, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. RISCH, and Mr. HELLER):

S. Res. 173. A resolution designating the week of May 15 through May 21, 2017, as "National Police Week"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. ENZI, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. PAUL, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. Res. 174. A resolution recognizing the 100th anniversary of Lions Clubs International and celebrating the Lions Clubs International for a long history of humanitarian service; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. COTTON):

S. Con. Res. 15. A concurrent resolution expressing support for the designation of October 28, 2017, as "Honoring the Nation's First Responders Day"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself and Mr. WYDEN):

S. Con. Res. 16. A concurrent resolution expressing support for strengthening engagement between the United States and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 170

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER) 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. 292

At the request of Mr. REED, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) were added as cosponsors of S. 292, a bill to maximize discovery, and accelerate de-

velopment and availability, of promising childhood cancer treatments, and for other purposes.

S. 474

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 474, a bill to condition assistance to the West Bank and Gaza on steps by the Palestinian Authority to end violence and terrorism against Israeli citizens.

S. 568

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 568, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to count a period of receipt of outpatient observation services in a hospital toward satisfying the 3-day inpatient hospital requirement for coverage of skilled nursing facility services under Medicare.

S. 569

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 569, a bill to amend title 54, United States Code, to provide consistent and reliable authority for, and for the funding of, the Land and Water Conservation Fund to maximize the effectiveness of the Fund for future generations, and for other purposes.

S. 591

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 591, a bill to expand eligibility for the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to expand benefits available to participants under such program, to enhance special compensation for members of the uniformed services who require assistance in everyday life, and for other purposes.

S. 597

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 597, a bill to increase Federal Pell Grants for the children of fallen public safety officers, and for other purposes.

S. 623

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the names of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 623, a bill to enhance the transparency and accelerate the impact of assistance provided under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to promote quality basic education in developing countries, to better enable such countries to achieve universal access to quality basic education and improved learning outcomes, to eliminate duplication and waste, and for other purposes.

S. 652

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S.

652, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize a program for early detection, diagnosis, and treatment regarding deaf and hard-of-hearing newborns, infants, and young children.

S. 765

At the request of Mr. PERDUE, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 765, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide for penalties for the sale of any Purple Heart awarded to a member of the Armed Forces.

S. 976

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 976, a bill to restore States' sovereign rights to enforce State and local sales and use tax laws, and for other purposes.

S. 1002

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1002, a bill to enhance the ability of community financial institutions to foster economic growth and serve their communities, boost small businesses, increase individual savings, and for other purposes.

S. 1085

At the request of Mr. TOOMEY, the names of the Senator from Iowa (Mrs. ERNST) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1085, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to provide enhanced penalties for convicted murderers who kill or target America's public safety officers.

S. 1094

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1094, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the accountability of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 1114

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1114, a bill to nullify the effect of the recent Executive order laying a foundation for discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, women, religious minorities, and others under the pretext of religious freedom.

S. 1135

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1135, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to clarify the Federal Pell Grant duration limits of borrowers who attend an institution of higher education that closes or commits fraud or other misconduct, and for other purposes.

S. 1155

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Vermont

(Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1155, a bill to amend title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 in order to increase the amount of financial support available for working students.

S. 1163

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1163, a bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure compliance of medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs with requirements relating to the scheduling of appointments, to require appointment by the President and confirmation by the Senate of certain health care officials of the Department, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. LEAHY:

S. 1174. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide that a deduction equal to fair market value shall be allowed for charitable contributions of literary, musical, artistic, or scholarly compositions created by the donor; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in celebration of Museum Day on May 18, we reintroduce the "Artist-Museum Partnership Act." This legislation would enable our country to keep cherished art works in the United States and to preserve them in our public institutions. At the same time, this legislation will erase an inequity in our Tax Code that currently serves as a disincentive for artists to donate their works to museums and libraries. Since 2000 I have introduced this same bill in each Congress. It was also included in the Senate-passed version of the 2001 tax reconciliation bill, the Senate-passed version of the 2003 Charity Aid, Recovery, and Empowerment, CARE, Act, and the Senate-passed version of the 2005 tax reconciliation bill.

This legislation would preserve cherished art works for the public by allowing artists to take a fair market deduction for works they donate to museums, libraries, colleges and other public institutions. Under current law, artists who donate their created work may only deduct the cost of supplies, while a collector of the same work who donates it to qualified charitable institutions is allowed to take a tax deduction equal to the fair market value of the donated work.

In my State of Vermont, we are incredibly proud of the great works produced by hundreds of local artists who choose to live and work in the Green Mountain State. Displaying their creations in museums and libraries helps develop a sense of pride among Vermonters and strengthens a bond with Vermont, its landscape, its beauty, and its cultural heritage. Anyone who has contemplated a painting in a museum or examined an original

manuscript or composition and has gained a greater understanding of both the artist and the subject as a result, knows the tremendous value of these works. I would like to see more of them, not fewer, preserved in Vermont and across the country.

Prior to 1969, artists and collectors alike were able to take a deduction equivalent to the fair market value of a work. Congress changed the law for artists in response to the perception that some taxpayers were taking advantage of the law by inflating the market value of self-created works. Much has changed in the United States since 1969 when the tax law was amended. There has been an explosion of artistic and literary creativity in the country that is valued throughout the world. Yet, since the law was changed, artists now give far less frequently than before, harming the public by denying it the opportunity to see museum-quality contemporary art. The current tax law discriminates against those who choose to make their living as artists and writers. It also undermines the ability of public and cultural institutions, especially those in small and midsized cities and towns, to collect and preserve our Nation's cultural patrimony. With no or meager acquisition budgets, it is impossible for them to compete in the global art market.

A letter from the distinguished Librarian of Congress Emeritus James Billington stated that "restoration of this tax deduction would vastly benefit their institution's manuscript and music holdings, and remove the single major impediment to developing the Library's graphic arts holdings. The Artist-Museum Partnership Act would once again allow artists who donate their own paintings, manuscripts, compositions, or scholarly compositions to be subject to the same new rules that all taxpayers or collectors who donate such works follow."

This legislation is vital because it reminds us that artists have an important role in the process of engaging communities, and artists are a cultural necessity in the fabric of any community in Vermont or around the world.

The Artist-Museum Partnership Act is supported by such organizations as the Vermont Arts Council, Shelburne Museum, Association of Art Museum Directors, American Alliance of Museums, Americans for the Arts, Dance/USA, League of American Orchestras, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, National Council for the Traditional Arts, OPERA America, Theatre Communications Group, Local Learning, Artists Rights Society, National Humanities Alliance, College Art Association, and Fractured Atlas.

By Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 1185. A bill to increase public safety by punishing and deterring firearms trafficking; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for too long, criminals have exploited loopholes in our gun laws. Congress's failure to properly address this issue has had devastating consequences for families and communities across the country. We have allowed criminals to readily obtain firearms through straw purchasers, trafficking networks, and unregulated gun markets. It is past time for this body to take action.

Today, I am reintroducing bipartisan legislation to close loopholes that allow criminals to obtain firearms through straw purchases and illegal trafficking. I am proud to be joined once again by Senators COLLINS and DURBIN. The Stop Illegal Trafficking in Firearms Act would make it a Federal crime to act as a straw purchaser of firearms or to illegally traffic in firearms. It sets forth tough penalties for anyone who transfers a firearm with reasonable cause to believe that the gun will be used in a drug crime, crime of violence, or act of terrorism, or for anyone who smuggles firearms out of the United States. This legislation would help keep guns out of the hands of those who seek to do us harm.

As the opioid crisis reached epidemic levels throughout the United States—and in Northeastern states like Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine in particular—gun traffickers stood ready to profit. Dealers who cannot pass background checks take advantage of addicts by forcing them to make straw purchases. Passing this gun trafficking bill and closing these loopholes will be a key piece of our response to the opioid crisis in so many of our communities.

This legislation will also be an important tool in preventing terrorist attacks on American soil. Terrorists have increasingly turned to guns to carry out domestic attacks, as they did in San Bernardino, Orlando, and Charleston. In the case of San Bernardino, the shooters relied on straw purchasing to acquire their deadly weapons. But because straw purchasing is not a Federal crime, prosecutors only charged the straw purchaser with making a false statement—a so called “paperwork” offense. I have often heard from law enforcement that current law does not do enough to deter gun traffickers. This legislation answers that call.

I also want to take note of National Police Week. This is a time when we pause to thank our Nation's law enforcement officers for their important work and many sacrifices. Earlier this week, thousands of officers gathered for a candlelight memorial. The names of 143 officers killed in the line of duty during 2016 were added to the walls of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. It is not enough to merely pay tribute to these men and women. They deserve action. A year ago during Police Week, President Obama signed into law my legislation reauthorizing the life-saving Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program. That law will

ensure that more than 200,000 officers receive protective vests over the next five years.

The legislation that Senator COLLINS and I introduce today will also help keep our officers and our neighborhoods safe. We must not wait for another national tragedy to address this problem. Only Congress can close these loopholes. I recognize that one piece of legislation cannot prevent all gun violence, but this bill would provide a critical tool to investigate and deter straw purchasers and gun traffickers. That is why it has strong support from groups representing law enforcement officers and prosecutors around the nation, including the Fraternal Order of Police, Major Cities Chiefs Association, Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, National Tactical Officers Association, and National District Attorneys Association.

Like so many Vermonters, I am proud to be a responsible gun owner; and I know that Senator COLLINS shares my commitment to protecting our Second Amendment rights. But we also share a desire to keep guns out of the hands of violent criminals, drug traffickers, and terrorists. There is broad agreement in Congress that our existing gun laws do too little to prevent gun violence in our communities. The legislation we introduce today is an important part of the solution, and I call on all Senators to support this bill and make our communities safer.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, each May we recognize National Police Week to honor the service and sacrifice of U.S. law enforcement officers and to pay tribute to those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. One meaningful way for us to honor our police officers and other law enforcement officials this week is to give them the tools they need to stop the illegal firearms traffickers who threaten their lives and the lives of those they protect.

Today, I rise to join Senator LEAHY in introducing the Stop Illegal Trafficking and Firearms Act. Our bill would strengthen Federal law by making it easier for prosecutors to go after gun traffickers, while fully protecting the rights of the vast majority of gun owners who are law-abiding citizens.

Straw purchasing is intended to achieve only one result, and that is to put a gun in the hands of a criminal who cannot legally obtain one. Today, traffickers exploit weaknesses in our laws by targeting individuals who can lawfully purchase guns, which are then used to commit crimes once they are transferred to the criminal, who would be unable to pass the background check. Right now, a straw purchaser can only be prosecuted for lying on a Federal form, and that is treated as a paperwork violation. Our bill would create new criminal offenses for straw purchasing, which would help our law enforcement officials take down these criminal enterprises.

The illegal guns that we are targeting in our bill are frequently sold,

resold, and trafficked across State lines, resulting in the proliferation of the illegal firearms in our communities. This practice has fueled the violence across our southern border associated with the Mexican drug cartels, as well as gang violence in our cities and, tragically, the heroin crisis that is ravaging so many families and communities and undermining public health and safety in States like Maine.

Police officers tell me they have seen a major influx of drug dealers coming from out of State, straight up I-95's iron pipeline and other interstate highways, with direct ties to gangs in major cities. They are ready to sell or trade prescription opioids and heroin for illegal guns.

Heroin flooding into our communities is reaching crisis levels. In 2016, there were 376 drug-induced overdose deaths in my State, the State of Maine. That is more than car crashes and suicides put together. It is 104 more deaths than the year before. So this crisis with opioids and heroin is getting worse, not better. The vast majority of these overdoses were caused by at least one opioid, whether pharmaceutical or illicit.

Often, drug dealers and gang members follow a similar pattern: They target addicts who have no criminal records, and then they trade or sell them drugs in exchange for guns. These gang members with criminal records cross into Maine and link up with drug addicts to be their straw buyers. These addicts are people with clean records who may legally purchase firearms. The addict then exchanges the gun for heroin to support his or her drug dependency, and the cycle is repeated time and again.

Last year I had a deeply disturbing briefing from Federal law enforcement officials about a case in Maine that fit this exact pattern. Gang members trafficked crack cocaine and heroin between New Haven, CT, and Bangor, ME. They committed acts of violence, including assaults, armed robberies, attempted murder, and murder. They traded narcotics for firearms and then distributed them to other gang members back in Connecticut. This is exactly the type of criminal activity our bill aims to prevent, and it complements existing laws that target criminals who are profiting from firearms and drug trafficking.

Current Federal law makes preventing and prosecuting straw purchasing offenses very difficult for law enforcement officials, since a straw purchaser can be prosecuted only for lying on a Federal form, a relatively minor offense.

The Stop Illegal Trafficking in Firearms Act would create new, specific criminal offenses for straw purchasing and trafficking in firearms. Instead of a slap on the wrist, these crimes would be punishable by up to 15 years in prison. For those straw purchasers who knew or have reasonable cause to believe that the firearm would be used to

commit a crime of violence, that crime would be punishable by up to 25 years in prison.

Our bill would also strengthen existing laws that prohibit gun smuggling. Right now, it is illegal for someone to smuggle a firearm into the United States with the intent to engage in drug trafficking or violent crime. To combat the drug cartels operating on our southern border, however, we must also prohibit firearms and ammunition from being trafficked out of the United States for those illegal purposes. In so doing, our bill would provide an important tool to combat trafficking organizations that are exporting firearms and ammunition from the United States and into Mexico where they are used by the drug cartels that are in turn fueling the heroin crisis here at home.

In a recent investigation along our southern border, ATF agents seized nearly 40,000 rounds of illegal ammunition from suspects who were attempting to smuggle both firearms and ammunition across the border and into Mexico. Similarly, a large percentage of the guns used in crimes in our large cities were trafficked across State lines.

I want to emphasize that our bill fully protects the Second Amendment rights of our law-abiding citizens. It protects legitimate private gun sales and is drafted to avoid sweeping in innocent transactions and placing unnecessary burdens on lawful private sales. It expressly exempts certain transactions that are permitted under current laws, such as gifts, raffles, and auctions. Furthermore, the bill expressly prohibits any authority provided by this act from being used to establish a Federal firearms registry—something I am strongly opposed to.

I started my remarks by reminding us all that this is National Police Week. Let's honor our police officers and other law enforcement by giving them this much needed tool to crack down on illegal firearm traffickers who are exploiting our addicts in so many ways in order to obtain guns that they are not legally able to purchase. I urge my colleagues to support this much needed legislation.

Thank you, Mr. President.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 172—DESIGNATING MAY 2017 AS “OLDER AMERICANS MONTH”

Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. CASEY, Mr. FLAKE, Mr. NELSON, Mr. RUBIO, Ms. WARREN, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. BURR, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 172

Whereas President John F. Kennedy first designated May as “Senior Citizens Month” in 1963;

Whereas, in 1963, only approximately 17,000,000 individuals living in the United States were age 65 or older, approximately 1/3 of those individuals lived in poverty, and few programs existed to meet the needs of older individuals in the United States;

Whereas, in 2017, there are more than 47,800,000 individuals age 65 or older in the United States, and those individuals account for 14.9 percent of the total population of the United States;

Whereas approximately 10,000 individuals in the United States turn age 65 each day;

Whereas, in 2015, more than 9,300,000 veterans of the Armed Forces were age 65 or older;

Whereas older individuals in the United States rely on Federal programs, such as programs under the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 301 et seq.) (including the Medicare program under title XVIII of that Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.) and the Medicaid program under title XIX of that Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.)), for financial security and high-quality affordable health care;

Whereas the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3001 et seq.) provides supportive services to help individuals of the United States who are age 60 or older maintain maximum independence in the homes and communities of those individuals;

Whereas that Act provides funding for programs, including nutrition services, transportation, and care management, to assist more than 11,000,000 older individuals in the United States each year;

Whereas compared to older individuals in the United States in past generations, older individuals in the United States in 2017 are working longer, living longer, and enjoying healthier, more active, and more independent lifestyles;

Whereas more than 5,300,000 individuals in the United States age 65 or older continue to work as full-time, year-round employees;

Whereas older individuals in the United States play an important role in society by continuing to contribute their experience, knowledge, wisdom, and accomplishments;

Whereas older individuals in the United States play vital roles in their communities and remain involved in volunteer work, mentoring activities, the arts, cultural activities, and civic engagement; and

Whereas a society that recognizes the success of older individuals and continues to enhance their access to quality and affordable health care will encourage the ongoing participation and heightened independence of those individuals and will ensure the continued safety and well-being of those individuals: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates May 2017 as “Older Americans Month”; and

(2) encourages the people of the United States to provide opportunities for older individuals to continue to flourish by—

(A) emphasizing the importance and leadership of older individuals through public recognition of the ongoing achievements of the older individuals;

(B) presenting opportunities for older individuals to share their wisdom, experience, and skills with younger generations; and

(C) recognizing older individuals as valuable assets in strengthening communities across the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 173—DESIGNATING THE WEEK OF MAY 15 THROUGH MAY 21, 2017, AS “NATIONAL POLICE WEEK”

Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. LEAHY,

Mr. WICKER, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. MORAN, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. JOHNSON, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. CARPER, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. HATCH, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. STRANGE, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. KING, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. SULLIVAN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mrs. ERNST, Mr. NELSON, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. PETERS, Mr. COONS, Mr. BROWN, Mr. KENNEDY, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. BURR, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. DAINES, Mr. BOOKER, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. YOUNG, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. SCOTT, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. COTTON, Mr. RUBIO, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CASEY, Mr. TOOMEY, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mr. ENZI, Mr. MARKEY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. CORKER, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. LEE, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. RISCH, and Mr. HELLER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 173

Whereas, in 1962, John Fitzgerald Kennedy signed the Joint Resolution entitled “Joint Resolution to authorize the President to proclaim May 15 of each year as Peace Officers Memorial Day and the calendar week of each year during which such May 15 occurs as Police Week” (36 U.S.C. 136);

Whereas the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, dedicated on October 15, 1991, is the national monument to honor law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty;

Whereas Federal, State, local, and tribal police officers, sheriffs, and other law enforcement officers across the United States serve with valor, dignity and integrity;

Whereas law enforcement officers are charged with pursuing justice for all individuals and performing their duties with fidelity to the constitutional and civil rights of the individuals that the law enforcement officers serve;

Whereas the resolve of law enforcement officers in the service of their communities is unyielding, despite inherent dangers in the performance of their duties;

Whereas the vigilance, compassion, and decency of law enforcement officers are the best defense of society against individuals who seek to do harm;

Whereas Peace Officers Memorial Day, 2017, honors the 143 law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty during 2016, including Amir Abdul-Khaliq, Lorne Bradley Aherns, Sean Lewis Allred, Manuel Alejandro Alvarez, Scott Alfred Ballantyne, Robert Aaron Barker, Gregory Eugene Barney, Douglas Scott Barney, II, Jose Daniel Barraza, Scott Leslie Bashioum, Stacey Allen Baumgartner, Brian Pecson Beliso, Anthony David Beminiio, Kenneth Levella Bettis, Timothy James Brackeen, Allen David Brandt, James Irwin Brockmeyer, Cody James Brotherson, Shannon Matthew Brown, Patrick Thomas Carothers, Nathaniel Alan Carrigan, Jose Ismael Chavez, Aaron Jackson Christian, Thomas L. Clardy, Paul Allen Clark, Brandon Scott Collins, Jacai David Colson, Adam Scott Conrad, William Pressley Cooper, Clint E. Corvinus, Thomas Wayne Cottrell, Jr., Sean Eamonn Cullen, Patrick Bryan Dailey, Jonathan Matias DeGuzman, Chad Phillip Dermeyer, Cody James Donahue, Endy Nddiobong Ekpanya, David Kyle Elahi, Eric Dale Ellsworth, Susan Louise Farrell, William George Fearon, Scot Fitzgerald, Leander Frank,

De'Greaun Reshun Frazier, Anthony Joseph Freeman, Jason Gallero, Bradford Allen Garafola, Sr., Derek Mace Geer, Matthew Lane Gerald, David Van Glasser, Dan Thomas Glaze, Jr., David Gomez, Jason Michael Goodding, Ashley Marie Guindon, R. Jake Gutierrez, Adam John Hartwig, David Stefan Hofer, Jack Lanceson Hopkins, Natasha Maria Hunter, John Thomas Isenhour, Montrell Lyle Jackson, Allen Lee Jacobs, Myron Anthony Jarrett, Mari Ann Johnson, Sean Richard Johnson, Michael Jason Katherman, Ronald Eugene Kienzle, Carl Allen Koontz, John Robert Kotfila, Jr., Michael Leslie Krol, Brad D. Lancaster, Zachary Tyler Larnerd, Jude Williams Lewis, Mark Franklin Logsdon, Alfonso Lopez, Rod Barron Lucas, Kenneth Hubert Maltby, Benjamin Edward Marconi, Justin Scott Martin, Lisa Anne Mauldin, Henry Malcolm McAleenan, Jr., Calvin Marcus McCullers, Jr., J. Scott McGuire, Luis A. Melendez-Maldonado, Robert David Melton, David Francis Michel, Jr., Kevin Dwayne Miller, Shawn Glenn Miller, Derrick Morial Mingo, Kenneth Ray Moats, Jason David Moszer, Kristopher David Moules, Jeffrey Don Nichols, Eric James Oliver, David Ortiz, Steven C. Owen, Edwin R. Pabon-Robles, Joseph George Portaro, Timothy P. Pratt, Carlos Bernabe Puente-Morales, Jorge Ramos, Robert Eugene Ransom, Darrin Lee Reed, Waldemar Rivera-Santiago, Victor M. Rosado-Rosa, Collin James Rose, Jorge Sanchez, Justin Ryan Scherlen, Nikealan D. Semmon, Daryl Wayne Smallwood, Nicholas Ryan Smarr, Jody Carl Smith, Michael Joseph Smith, Steven Michael Smith, Timothy Kevin Smith, Verdell Smith, Sr., Harvey Snook, III, Blake Curtis Snyder, Patrick Michael Sondron, Kenneth Joseph Starrs, Kenneth Melvin Steil, Paul R. Stuewer, Martin Tase Sturgill, II, Ronald Tarentino, Jr., James Lee Tartt, Nathan Daniel Taylor, Ryan Sean Thomas, Brent Alan Thompson, Paul J. Tuozzolo, Jose Gilbert Vega, Kenneth V. Velez, Michael Josua Ventura, Dennis Randall Wallace, Landon Eugene Weaver, Justin Scott White, Frankie Lamar Williams, Michael Scott Williams, Michael Arthur Winter, Kerry Joseph Winters, Sr., Patricio Enrique Zamarripa, Joseph Peter Zangaro, Marco Antonio Zarate, and Lesley Marie Zerebny; and

Whereas, during the first 4 months of 2017, 42 law enforcement officers across the United States have made the ultimate sacrifice: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates the week of May 15 through May 21, 2017, as “National Police Week”;

(2) expresses strong support for law enforcement officers across the United States for their efforts to build safer and more secure communities;

(3) recognizes the need to ensure that law enforcement officers have the equipment, training, and resources necessary to protect their health and safety while the law enforcement officers are protecting the public;

(4) recognizes the members of the law enforcement community for their selfless acts of bravery;

(5) acknowledges that police officers and other law enforcement officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice should be remembered and honored;

(6) expresses condolences to the loved ones of each law enforcement officer who has made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty; and

(7) encourages the people of the United States to observe National Police Week with appropriate ceremonies and activities that promote awareness of the vital role of law enforcement officers in building safer and more secure communities across the United States.

SENATE RESOLUTION 174—RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF LIONS CLUBS INTERNATIONAL AND CELEBRATING THE LIONS CLUBS INTERNATIONAL FOR A LONG HISTORY OF HUMANITARIAN SERVICE

Mr. MORAN (for himself, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. ENZI, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. PAUL, and Mrs. SHAHEEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 174

Whereas, on June 7, 1917, Chicago business leader Melvin Jones founded Lions Clubs International in Chicago, Illinois, based on the principle that “[y]ou can’t get very far until you start doing something for somebody else”;

Whereas the motto of Lions Clubs International, “We Serve”;

(1) was selected in 1954 after having been submitted by Lion D.A. Stevenson of Font Hill, Ontario, in an international contest; and

(2) applies to the charitable and humanitarian priorities of Lions Clubs International, including—

(A) eyesight preservation and blindness prevention;

(B) services for individuals with disabilities;

(C) hearing and speech conservation;

(D) diabetes awareness;

(E) youth outreach;

(F) services for older individuals;

(G) activities that promote international goodwill;

(H) disaster relief; and

(I) environmental protection;

Whereas, with over 46,000 clubs and 1,400,000 members in over 200 countries and geographical areas around the globe, Lions Clubs International is the largest service organization in the world;

Whereas the purposes of Lions Clubs International include—

(1) to create and foster a spirit of understanding among people around the world;

(2) to promote the principles of good government and good citizenship;

(3) to take an active interest in the civic, cultural, social, and moral welfare of the community;

(4) to provide a forum for the open discussion of all matters of public interest, except that members of Lions Clubs International may not debate partisan politics and sectarian religion;

(5) to encourage service-minded individuals to serve their communities without personal financial reward; and

(6) to encourage efficiency and promote high ethical standards in commerce, industry, public works, and professional and private endeavors;

Whereas, on March 12, 1920, a Lions Club was chartered in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, and Lions Clubs became an international organization;

Whereas, in 1925, at the Lions Club in Cedar Point, Ohio, Helen Keller charged members of Lions Clubs International with becoming “knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness”;

Whereas, in 1926, polar explorer and member of the District of Columbia Lions Club, Admiral Richard E. Byrd, Jr., flew over the North Pole carrying the flag of Lions Clubs International;

Whereas, in 1930, after witnessing an individual with a vision impairment having difficulty crossing a street, Lion George Bonham painted a cane white with a red

band for use by visually impaired individuals;

Whereas, in 1931—

(1) the first Lions Club was established south of the United States in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico; and

(2) the first Lions Clubs International convention was held in Toronto, Ontario;

Whereas, in 1935, during the Lions Clubs International convention in Mexico City, Amelia Earhart, who was an honorary member of the New York City Lions Club, completed a record-breaking nonstop flight from Los Angeles, California, to Mexico;

Whereas, in 1939, the members of the Detroit Uptown Lions Club converted an old farmhouse in the State of Michigan into a school to train dog guides for visually impaired individuals, helping to popularize dog guides worldwide;

Whereas, on June 6, 1939, the first Little League baseball game was played at Park Point in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, after Lion Carl Edwin Stotz appealed to Lions Clubs International, the Young Men’s Christian Association, and other community partners for support to provide an organized baseball program for children;

Whereas, in 1944, the first eye bank in the world was established in New York City, and as of March 2017, most eye banks are sponsored by Lions Clubs International;

Whereas, in 1945, Lions Clubs International assisted in drafting the Charter of the United Nations, which began a lasting relationship between Lions Clubs International and the United Nations that includes Lions Clubs International aid and volunteers for—

(1) the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund;

(2) the World Health Organization;

(3) the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; and

(4) other humanitarian projects;

Whereas, in 1957, the Leo Clubs youth program of Lions Clubs International was established to provide young people with the opportunity for personal development through volunteer work;

Whereas, as of March 2017, there are approximately 157,000 Leos and 600 Leo Clubs in over 200 countries and geographical areas worldwide;

Whereas, in 1968, the Lions Clubs International Foundation (referred to in this preamble as “LCIF”) was established to assist Lions Clubs International with global and large-scale local humanitarian projects;

Whereas LCIF has given more than \$826,000,000 in grants to support the humanitarian work of Lions Clubs International;

Whereas, in 1972, LCIF awarded its first grant, in the amount of \$5,000, to assist flood victims in South Dakota;

Whereas, in 1977, Lion Jimmy Carter became the 39th President of the United States;

Whereas, in 1985, LCIF awarded its first Major Catastrophe Grant, in the amount of \$50,000, for earthquake relief in Mexico;

Whereas, in 1986, Mother Teresa accepted a Lions Humanitarian Award;

Whereas, in 1987, Lions Clubs International amended its bylaws and invited women to become members, and women are now the fastest growing group of new members in Lions Clubs International;

Whereas, in 1990, LCIF launched SightFirst, an initiative that—

(1) assists Lions Clubs International in activities to restore eyesight and prevent blindness on a global scale; and

(2) eventually raised more than \$415,000,000 to target low vision, trachoma, river blindness, childhood blindness, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma;

Whereas, in 1995, LCIF began a partnership with the Carter Center, led by former President and Lion Jimmy Carter, to combat

river blindness in Africa and Latin America, and by 2003, LCIF and the Carter Center had provided 50,000,000 river blindness treatments;

Whereas, in 2001, LCIF partnered with the Special Olympics on Opening Eyes, an initiative to provide vision screening for Special Olympics athletes;

Whereas, in 2002, Lions Clubs International chartered a club in China, which became the first voluntary membership group in China;

Whereas, in 2007, the Financial Times ranked LCIF as the best nongovernmental organization worldwide with which to establish a partnership;

Whereas, in 2010, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation contributed \$5,000,000 to the One Shot, One Life measles initiative, and Lions raised more than \$10,000,000 to support measles prevention efforts during the subsequent 2 years;

Whereas, in 2011, LCIF awarded its 10,000th grant, bringing the total amount awarded to grant recipients by LCIF to \$708,000,000;

Whereas, in 2013, LCIF partnered with the GAVI Alliance to protect millions of children from measles and rubella in 2013;

Whereas LCIF committed \$30,000,000 for immunizations, an amount matched by the United Kingdom and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation;

Whereas, in 2013, with the support of Lions Clubs International and the Carter Center, river blindness was eliminated in Colombia; and

Whereas, in 2014, Lions Clubs International launched the Centennial Service Challenge, a global initiative to serve 100,000,000 people around the world: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates Lions Clubs International on its 100th anniversary on June 7, 2017;

(2) recognizes Lions Clubs International for 100 years of promoting community service and humanitarian assistance;

(3) encourages Lions Clubs International to continue to emphasize the values of community service and improving the community for all individuals; and

(4) applauds Lions Clubs International for instilling in young people the value of community service.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 15—EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF OCTOBER 28, 2017, AS “HONORING THE NATION’S FIRST RESPONDERS DAY”

Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. COTTON) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs:

S. CON. RES. 15

Whereas first responders include professional and volunteer fire, police, emergency medical technician, and paramedic workers in the United States;

Whereas there are more than 25,300,000 first responders in the United States working to keep communities safe;

Whereas first responders deserve to be recognized for their commitment to safety, defense, and honor; and

Whereas October 28, 2017, would be an appropriate day to establish as “Honoring the Nation’s First Responders Day”: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That the Senate—

(1) supports the designation of October 28, 2017, as “Honoring the Nation’s First Responders Day”;

(2) honors and recognizes the contributions of first responders; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States to observe Honoring the Nation’s First Responders Day with appropriate ceremonies and activities that promote awareness of the contributions of first responders in the United States.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 16—EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR STRENGTHENING ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Mr. HATCH (for himself and Mr. WYDEN) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. CON. RES. 16

Whereas the United States and the other members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (in this preamble referred to as “APEC”) have, since 1989, worked collaboratively to advance commercial and trade interests in the Asia-Pacific region;

Whereas the Asia-Pacific region accounts for 41 percent of the world’s population, 54 percent of the world’s gross domestic product, and 44 percent of the world’s trade;

Whereas expanding trade and investment between the United States and the Asia-Pacific region has created new commercial opportunities and jobs in the United States;

Whereas United States businesses in the Asia-Pacific region face obstacles to doing business in the region as a result of tariff and nontariff barriers, including discriminatory policies and regulations;

Whereas strengthening trade and investment between the United States and other APEC members and addressing tariff and nontariff barriers to United States exports has the potential to benefit United States businesses, manufacturers, farmers, ranchers, workers, and consumers;

Whereas APEC was established as a regional economic forum to leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific region to create greater prosperity for the people of the region and serves as a forum for the United States to address business concerns, promote high standards, and facilitate economic growth in the region;

Whereas APEC contributes to United States economic policies that promote fairness, due process, and the rule of law by supporting trade rules embodied in the World Trade Organization (in this preamble referred to as the “WTO”) and the establishment of new WTO commitments, developing model measures for high quality trade agreements in the Asia-Pacific region, encouraging coherence in regulations and standards in the region, and encouraging policies to promote development of the digital economy; and

Whereas the APEC Leaders’ Meeting in November 2017 in Da Nang, Vietnam, and preparatory meetings at the ministerial level, including the meeting in May 2017 of the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade, provide important opportunities to demonstrate to the world the commitment of the United States to increasing prosperity and security in the Asia-Pacific region: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the continuing success of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (in this resolution referred to as “APEC”) is in the na-

tional economic interest of the United States;

(2) APEC should be a part of the diplomatic and economic strategy of the United States for the Asia-Pacific region; and

(3) the United States should continue to engage APEC in promoting economic growth through the adoption of rules-based policies to strengthen trade and investment between the United States and other APEC members.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I have 7 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 Thursday, May 18, 2017, at 9:30 a.m. in open session to consider nominations.

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, May 18, 2017 at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled “Domestic and International Policy Update.”

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to hold an Executive Session during the session of the Senate on Thursday, May 18, 2017, at 10 a.m. in Room 216 of the Hart Senate Office Building.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate in order to hold a hearing on Thursday, May 18, 2017, at 10:15 a.m. in Room 366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC. The purpose of the hearing is to consider the nomination of Mr. David Bernhardt, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Committee on Finance is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, May 18, 2017, at 10:30 a.m., in 215 Dirksen Senate Office Building, to consider favorably reporting the Creating High-Quality Results and Outcomes Necessary to Improve Chronic (CHRONIC) Care Act of 2017.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, May 18, 2017 at 9:30 a.m., to hold a hearing entitled “Nominations.”

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on May 18, 2017, at 10 a.m., in SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate

Office Building, to conduct an executive business meeting.

OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 172, submitted earlier today.

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 172) designating May 2017 as "Older Americans Month."

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

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

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

The resolution (S. Res. 172) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 173, submitted earlier today.

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 173) designating the week of May 15 through May 21, 2017, as "National Police Week."

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

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

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

The resolution (S. Res. 173) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of all nominations placed on the Secretary's desk in the Foreign Service; that the nominations be confirmed, that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the

table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE

* PN116 FOREIGN SERVICE nomination of Alexander Dickie, IV, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of March 21, 2017.

* PN353 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (201) beginning Joel Justin Agaloff, and ending Iva Ziza, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 25, 2017.

* PN354-1 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (96) beginning Edward Francis Acevedo, and ending Benjamin D. Zinner, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 25, 2017.

* PN355-1 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (19) beginning Jim Nelson Barnhart, Jr., and ending Anne N. Williams, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 25, 2017.

* PN356 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (9) beginning Jeanne F. Bailey, and ending Robert Henry Hanson, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 25, 2017.

* PN357-1 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (20) beginning Jeffery S. Austin, and ending Jeffrey G. Willnow, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 25, 2017.

* PN358-1 FOREIGN SERVICE nomination of Scott S. Sindelar, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 25, 2017.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, MAY 22, 2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 3 p.m., Monday, May 22; 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; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Branstad nomination; further, that the time until 5:30 p.m. be equally divided in the usual form; finally, that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the postcloture time on the Branstad nomination expire at 5:30 p.m. Monday.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY,
MAY 22, 2017, AT 3 P.M.

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 2:24 p.m., adjourned until Monday, May 22, 2017, at 3 p.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

DAVID J. REDL, OF NEW YORK, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION, VICE LAWRENCE E. STRICKLING.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

CLAIRE M. GRADY, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY FOR MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, VICE RUSSELL C. DEYO.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

NEOMI RAO, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET, VICE HOWARD A. SHELANSKI.

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be brigadier general

COL. JOHN P. LAWLOR, JR.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be brigadier general

COL. DION B. MOTEN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be brigadier general

COL. BOWLMAN T. BOWLES III

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be brigadier general

COL. MICHAEL R. FENZEL

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

WILLIAM F. MCCLINTOCK

THE FOLLOWING NAMED ARMY NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12211:

To be colonel

DAVID S. ALLEN
MARCUS A. BUSSELL
ALLEN R. HORNER
KENNETH P. HUTNICK
BRAD G. JOHNSON
ALEXANDER V. MCLEMORE
JOE H. MILLER II
JUDE B. MULVEY
BARRY K. VINCENT

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

JEFFREY L. WASHINGTON

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 716:

To be lieutenant commander

KENNETH M. KING

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be commander

GARRY P. CLOSAS

IN THE MARINE CORPS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 6222:

To be colonel

JASON K. FETTIG

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate May 18, 2017:

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

RACHEL L. BRAND, OF IOWA, TO BE ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

TODD PHILIP HASKELL, OF FLORIDA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND

PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO.

TULINABO SALAMA MUSHINGI, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU.

FOREIGN SERVICE

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATION OF ALEXANDER DICKIE IV.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JOEL JUSTIN AGALSOFF AND ENDING WITH IVA ZIZA, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON APRIL 25, 2017.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH EDWARD FRANCIS ACEVEDO AND ENDING WITH BENJAMIN

D. ZINNER, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON APRIL 25, 2017.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JIM NELSON BARNHART, JR. AND ENDING WITH ANNE N. WILLIAMS, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON APRIL 25, 2017.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JEANNE F. BAILEY AND ENDING WITH ROBERT HENRY HANSON, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON APRIL 25, 2017.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATIONS BEGINNING WITH JEFFERY S. AUSTIN AND ENDING WITH JEFFREY G. WILLNOW, WHICH NOMINATIONS WERE RECEIVED BY THE SENATE AND APPEARED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON APRIL 25, 2017.

FOREIGN SERVICE NOMINATION OF SCOTT S. SINDELAR.